

## Book Reviews

In our books section, we inform readers about works which have been recently added to the Haddington House Library. Most are recent publications, but on occasion we include rare and valuable books we have acquired which students, pastors, patrons and others may want to come and consult. All reviews are made in keeping with our editorial policy; that is, to help our readers in the stewardship of their resources and time. The *Journal* uses the standard abbreviation ‘hc’ to denote hard cover. The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) has been included with all books when available. We begin this section with “**Book Reviews**”, organized according to the four divisions of theology.

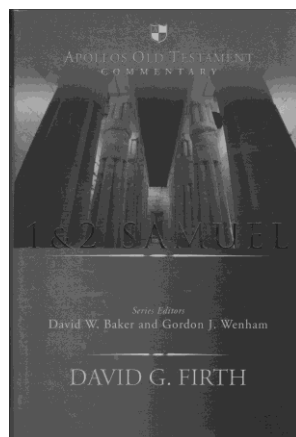
## Biblical Theology

**1 & 2 Samuel. David G. Firth. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Nottingham, England/Downers Grove, IL: Apollos/ InterVarsity, 2009, 614 pp., hc. ISBN: 978-0-8308-2508-0**

David Firth is lecturer in Old Testament and B.A. Course Leader at Cliff College Derbyshire in the United Kingdom. In the new IVP Apollos series on the Old Testament, he contributes a very significant and weighty volume on 1 & 2 Samuel.

This commentary series from IVP is committed to offering a “full exposition of the theological message within the framework of biblical theology, and a commitment to the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament” (from the dust-jacket). Series editors, Gordon Wenham and David Baker, state in the preface that authors were selected on the basis of their ability to marry scholarship and application. This is certainly encouraging and is indeed what we find in this volume. It helps to fill the hole of good evangelical scholarship on the Old Testament histories.

The first forty-eight pages of the book are dedicated to the questions of authorship, date etc., and the book concludes with a massive bibliography and Scripture, author and subject indices. Firth argues strongly for the unity



of authorship in the book by comparing content structure and themes over the whole of 1 and 2 Samuel. He says, "1 Sam. 28 shows awareness of 1 Sam. 15, especially given that the sin which leads to Saul's death is divination, a sin already indicated in 1 Sam. 15:23" (p. 25). He says further, "The book's literary coherence along with the way that different sections of the book all interact suggest that Samuel is a planned composition" (p. 26).

The series is directed at a broad audience from Bible students to pastors and academics. It attempts to take the ancient text and make it applicable to the modern context. In order to do this, Firth breaks the commentary into four manageable sections. First, he offers a fresh translation of the text from the Hebrew. As an extension of the translation section, he draws attention to any verses and words that require special examination with regards to textual criticism or etymology and thus provides a necessary, though not exhaustive, analysis of the text.

The second section on "Form and Structure" deals with any patterns of thought or rhetorical devices that the author might be employing in drawing out his point. For example, in the chapter dealing with the calling and rise of Saul, Firth shows how the author compares this structurally to the call, rise and success of David. Again, in chapter twenty-three he points out the author's intention in reinforcing the sovereignty of God by setting His deliverance from the hand of Saul at Keilah and then at Ziph side by side to show that their striking similarity is more than coincidence but is the ordering of a sovereign and gracious God. Structural observations like these are able to help preachers to draw out the intended richness of the text.

The "Comment" section takes us simply to an outline of the major points of the text, while the "Explanation" portion of the commentary takes us beyond David to the wider application of the history in the field of biblical theology. On the famous "David and Goliath" passage he comments, "David demonstrates an understanding of the central purpose of Israel's election and this understanding has shaped his actions" (p. 212).

One criticism about the "Explanation" sections, where, as the above quotation shows, Firth seeks to draw out some broader applications, is that he is weak in developing the Christological significance of David and the ultimate fulfillment in the Kingdom of Jesus. This is born out in the thin smattering of New Testament texts in the Scripture index. There are places where Firth is able to find some "practical applications" to the life of the Christian and draw attention to how the Lord expects His people to act or not act. For instance, in commenting on Hannah's Song, Firth makes the obvious connections to Mary in the New Testament by saying quite rightly, "God remains the champion of the poor and the weak who cry to him, he still brings down the mighty and exalts the poor" and again, ". . . Paul knows that strength comes only in weakness (2 Cor. 12:1-10), that only those who do not seek power can be exalted by God" (p. 61). True enough! But one has to ask why he cannot also draw our attention to the "object" of the believer's faith in an

epoch of Israel's history that parallels the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus in such manifold ways.

On the famous account of David's anointing, he comments simply, "The human propensity is to go for the obvious, as does Samuel in his initial response to Eliab, but Yahweh's ways are not those of mankind" (p. 185). Compare that to Dale R. Davis' Christologically rich application where he says, "Perhaps at no time did the living God disclose a more flabbergasting choice than in the case of David's greater Descendant. 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.' (Ps 118:22; 1 Pet. 2:4). What should we deduce from that? We should realize Yahweh made his choice (Ps. 118:23a), and we should relish it (Ps. 118:23b). There is a delight we should have over Yahweh's unusual, unguessable ways. It honors him when we revel in his surprises."<sup>1</sup>

It is not always apparent to the exegete where those connections to the person and work of Christ are and looking to others who have done some "spade-work" in that area is helpful. Those who are preaching 1 and 2 Samuel and are looking for assistance here would have to supplement this otherwise helpful work with other sources; two modern standards would be A. W. Pink's classic on the *Life of David* and more recently Dale Ralph Davis' *Looking on the Heart*.

I would offer one further criticism. In a commentary of this size on a book of the Bible with sometimes such a dizzying amount of activity and vast amounts of territory covered by its main characters, one might expect at least one map to give us the lay of the land. For example, the ESV Study Bible in the space of 1 and 2 Samuel alone boasts of no less than seventeen color side-bar maps to give some rich geographical context to the narrative. If there are more commentaries to follow in this series, maps could be an area the editors would want to revisit.

Despite these caveats, this is a significant commentary and one that preachers and Bible students alike ought to be able to turn to with profit and confidence.

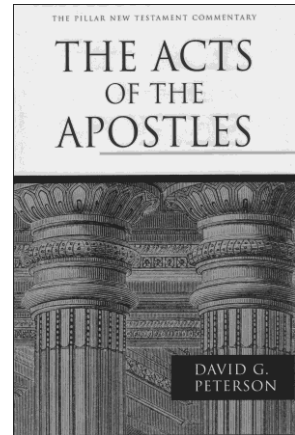
*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton, the minister of the Western Charge of the Free Church of Scotland, Prince Edward Island. Rev. Compton is a graduate of the University of Prince Edward Island and the Free Church College, Edinburgh. He pastored in Edmonton, Alberta, before returning to the Island. He also serves as a Trustee of Haddington House.*



<sup>1</sup>Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*. Focus on the Bible (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2000), 81.

***The Acts of the Apostles.* David G. Peterson. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009, 790 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8028-3731-8**

This volume is one in the Pillar commentary series designed specifically for pastors and Bible teachers seeking resources which facilitate a highly informed but relevant quality of holistic Bible exposition. The series is marked by the expectation that the contributor approach the Bible text with an “evenhanded openness” expressive of the values of genuine reverence, holy joy and unquestioning obedience. An approach paired with the contributor’s method of commentary, one in which a dialogue with important contemporary scholars is exercised. In these lies the facilitative strength of the series bringing a non-technical but informed link between academic results and the sermon. The series editor, D.A. Carson, proffers that Peterson has superbly fulfilled this task, an assessment with which I must concur although with minor reservations.



Dr. David G. Peterson, an ordained minister of the Anglican Church of Australia, is currently the Senior Research Fellow at Moore Theological College in Sydney. There he teaches New Testament Exegesis and Theology, and leads two courses on Worship. Prior to this appointment, from 1996-2007, he was the Principal of Oak Hill Theological College in London, England. His commentary is the product of over fifteen years of study, teaching, scholarly interaction and writing on the book of Acts. The commentary proper is prefaced by a joint introduction to and discussion of the theology of Acts spanning ninety-seven pages. The remainder of the volume, six hundred plus pages, contains the judicious exegesis of Luke’s second volume. The commentary contains no supplementary sections such as appendices, maps or glossary.

After a brief preface, in the astute introduction Peterson deals with the usual commentary categories of, “authorship and date”, “genre”, “sources”, “character”, “structure”, “purpose”, “interpretation” and in the subsequent section treats Lukan theology. Peterson holds to traditional authorship, a mid 70s date of publication for Acts; he reads the volume primarily as historiography and therefore takes a literary-critical approach as defined primarily by Tannehill. For Peterson, Acts relates: the fulfilling of the “Plan of God” in the resurrected and exalted Jesus, as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures of Old Testament (Squires, 1993; Marshall, 1998), the Holy Spirit’s imparting of the blessings of the relationship with God by faith in Jesus, the witness and mission of Jesus’ followers and the story of the nascent church. Peter-

son's treatment of Lukan atonement theology present in Acts is good, yet reference to Mikeal C. Parsons' chapter in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (1998) on the significant connection between Isaiah 53 and Acts 8 was left out of the dialogue. This would have further strengthened Peterson's case and better addressed scholarly criticism. Also, the "we" passages beginning at Acts 16 till chapter 28, were treated mainly in the context of commentary and only briefly in the introduction. With regard to the full significance of the "we" passages, it was good to see the reference to S.E. Porter (2001), which will undoubtedly be helpful to readers. Peterson's references and notes are helpful in themselves as they provide a valuable resource pool for expanded reading.

Reading through the commentary one apprehends rather quickly that Peterson's analysis shares a commonality, has positive dialogue, with the work of C.K. Barrett, F.F. Bruce, L.T. Johnson, I.H. Marshall, F.S. Spencer and R.C. Tannehill and B. Witherington III. All of these writers are reputable Luke and Acts scholars. Interaction, though, with C.H. Talbert's writings is missing yet Peterson has provided ways around this particularity so that his commentary does not accumulate a comparative-critical deficit. The particular array of the above noted scholars gives somewhat of a pre and post 1974 balance to Peterson's observations coloured by the basic shades of historical-critical, traditional-logical, socio-rhetorical and narratological approaches.

After using this commentary over a period of time, it has been observed that it lends itself easily to the rigors of sermon and teaching preparation. It is a useful tool for focusing on information in the text and its background with a view to the broader purpose and design of Luke and Acts such that it fosters application and cultural contextualization. In this way the commentary facilitates the healthy abstraction of themes from well-rounded concepts. Peterson's commentary is consistent in this feature throughout his exegesis. A representative example of this strength can be taken from the observations on Stephen's Ministry and Defence in Acts 6-7. Peterson identifies the means and importance of Stephen's characterization in that he is contrasted with his opponents but also compared to Moses on the basis of his Spirit-filled character and on the basis of his defence (p. 244). Stephen's ministry is shown to extend beyond waiting on tables for he did wonders and signs like Jesus, the apostles and Moses thus portraying him as "fulfilling a pattern of prophetic destiny which involves rejection and suffering" (p. 238). Thus, "Stephen is a model of faithful witness and response for readers who may be in the midst of opposition and suffering" (p. 244).

Another interesting sample of Peterson's exegesis comes from Acts 20, Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders, particularly verse 32. Paul warns the Ephesian elders of impending schism in the congregation such that the elders cannot even rely on themselves to be faithful in their office. Hence, Paul, "...committed or entrusted them (*paratithemai*; cf. Lk 23:46; Acts 14:23) 'to God and to the word of his grace' (*tō theō kai tō logo tēs chariots autou*).

The two parts of this last phrase probably represent one concept: they were entrusted ‘to God, who is active in the word of grace.’” (p. 572). At this point Peterson refers to Barrett who observes the use of “hendiadys”, in Greek the coordination of two independent ideas (p. 572), that is the division of what would be an adjective and noun into two nouns connected by “and”. Peterson correctly observes, however, that, “God and the gospel cannot be divided, since he uses the gospel to save those who believe, both Jews and Gentiles...” (p. 572). Peterson continues, “Once more the gospel is identified as a message of grace from God (cf. v. 24), which not only brings people to Christ in the first place but is also powerful enough to ‘build you up’ (cf. 9:31) ‘and give you an inheritance’ (cf. 7:5) ‘among all those who are sanctified’ (cf. 26:18).” Peterson points out that these are three significant Pauline terms and proceeds to make extensive references to their places in the Pauline corpus, which is an “important contribution to Luke’s theology of the gospel” (p. 572). In this example Peterson has not allowed grammatical complexities to obscure the consistent portrayal of theological interests in the text. It is evident that Peterson has in mind the sole purpose of optimizing exegetical evenhandedness.

An apparent minor “weakness” of Peterson’s commentary is that he allows the limits of the analysis of those he is in dialogue with to bear some influence on the scope of his own discussions. Also, as with most things written, time and developments in research threaten thoroughness. This is felt only in a few specific areas as one utilizes the commentary. This, however, cannot be said to be a deficiency. It is most clearly seen in his treatment of Acts 28 and its abrupt open ending, for which a number of developed explanations have been posited (Puskas, 1980 [2009]; Brosend, 1996; Marguerat, 1999; Troftgruben, 2009 [of which many could not have been aware]). It should be noted in all fairness, however, that this is a minor concern for it is evident from Peterson’s logic that he is conscious of the nature and role that secondary sources have in his exegesis.

Peterson’s contribution to the Pillar series is formidable, and to Lukan scholarship it is valuable. He has successfully synthesized a significant amount of information on Acts, which has direct bearing in a literary approach to the text and in an application respecting Lukan design. The work is far from just a collation from Acts’ scholarship; it is closer to what might be termed a “synthesis-commentary” with a goal to elevate the work of pastors, teachers and possibly even laity.

*Reviewed by Rev. Frank Z. Kovács, the tutor for the distance Bible courses at Haddington House and pastor of the Reformed Hungarian Church in Toronto. He has his M.Th. degree from North-West University in South Africa and is a Ph.D. candidate there in Lukan studies.*



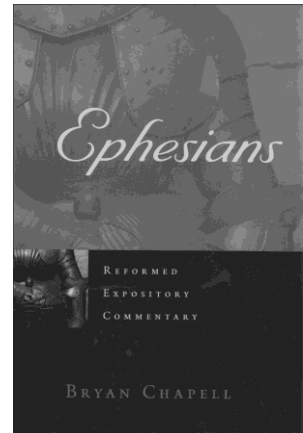
***Ephesians*. Bryan Chapell. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009, 383 pp., hc. ISBN 978-1-59638-016-5**

Covenant Seminary president, Bryan Chapell is already well known to some *Journal* readers through his now “go-to” work on preaching, *Christ Centered Preaching* (Baker, 1994). Chapell shows that his homiletical skill is not confined to the theory or mechanics of preaching but also the practice of it as his recent commentary on Ephesians ably demonstrates. Readers might recall that other commentaries in this series, *Galatians* and *1 Timothy*, were also reviewed. (See *Journal* volumes 8 and 11.)

With the rise of interest in Reformed theology throughout the Christian community (as witnessed by articles in *Time* and *Christianity Today*), there is a need not only to be able to articulate Reformed theology as a system of doctrine but, just as importantly, to model that in preaching to the world. This is where these commentaries in the Reformed Expository Commentary series are very helpful. Hopefully the title will not dissuade the Lord’s people in the pew from profiting from this helpful work since it is very much geared to a broad readership, not just pastors. In terms of its accessibility, one might liken it to The Bible Speaks Today series but with a distinctively Reformed thrust.

What you find right from the introductory chapter on election and predestination (vv. 3-6) is an unapologetic, yet attractive, presentation of the eternal purposes of God in Christ. Chapell does not treat Paul’s presentation of these doctrines as if someone were reading a systematic theology but roots Paul’s interests in the context in which the Ephesians found themselves, namely the sin, failures and struggles that we all encounter as the people of God.

Chapell provides numerous helpful illustrations. For example, he describes a struggling congregation in a hopeless district of New Orleans and asks how it is that a congregation who sometimes senses the hopelessness of their mandate continues to encourage themselves as the people of God without feeling they are disappointing their Lord all the time. Chapell says, “Wouldn’t it make a difference to your heart, to your zeal, to know God loved you forever, even when you as a church were wrestling to survive?” He adds, “Paul uses the assurance of predestination to strengthen the church for her struggle against evil and discouragement” (p. 27). He wisely concludes, “Predestination . . . was meant to give a profound sense of confidence and security in God’s love so that we will not despair in situations of great



difficulty, pain and shame” (p. 27). Chapell echoes the Westminster Confession here as it states, “So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel” (ch. 3:8).

Chapell unpacks with pastoral wisdom the many applications of the gospel outlined in this majestic letter. He covers the implications of the gospel in families with an extensive treatment of the various roles. He shows not only how the gospel is to be preached but also lived out in the home. His chapter on male headship, aptly entitled “The Sacrificial Head”, outlines the high calling of Christ-centered male headship in the home. How urgently does the church need to hear this again. He says, “Husbands represent Christ to their spouses . . . their primary purpose as heads of households is to help all persons in the home fully apprehend the Lord’s grace in their lives” (p. 277).

His masterful and liberal use of illustrations shows why it was the practice of the Lord to pepper His teaching with stories. Space would fail us to comment section by section, but, put simply, it is this use of biblical Reformed theology married to warm and practical application that makes this commentary so worthwhile.

This is not a technical commentary except where it has to be. If you are looking for that you will need to go elsewhere. It does realize its goal in integrating the doctrines of grace so richly found throughout Ephesians into modern life. We can be thankful, especially those of us in the preaching ministry, for this contemporary and accessible treatment of an epistle whose message needs to be clearly proclaimed now more than ever.

*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton*



## Systematic Theology

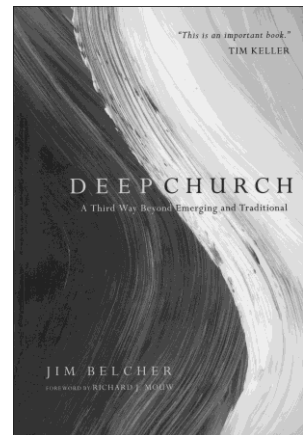
***Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional.***  
**Jim Belcher. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009, 240 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8308-3716-8**

One of the most confusing topics for many people from a traditional church background is the emerging church. Some are attempting to ignore it, others quickly dismiss it, still others vigorously critique it and many others wonder what all the fuss is about. In his book, *Deep Church*, Jim Belcher is attempting not only to bring some clarity to the topic but also to propose a response rather than simply a critique.

Belcher, lead pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California, says that he is hoping to reach a varied audience that includes four groups of people: 1) people who are unhappy with emerging only or traditional only; 2) those who do not know much about the emerging church and want to see what it is about; 3) seminary students who are trying to figure out their ecclesiology; and 4) experienced pastors who are wondering if there might be another way. While reaching such a varied audience is not easy, Belcher has done a good job of engaging the four groups mentioned. So, if you fit into one of those groups, I encourage you to give this book a try.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is an explanation of Belcher's own journey in, around, through and out of the emerging and traditional circles; a journey which led him in search of a third way. In the second part of the book, Belcher explains how his proposed third way compares to traditional and emerging churches.

While one might be tempted to get straight to the second part of the book to see what Belcher, and those he brings into the discussion, have to say about truth, gospel, preaching and so on, it is important to stress that the first part of the book sets the stage for the rest and should not be skipped over. It is here that Belcher explains his journey and this needs to be understood before his "Deep Church" proposal can be examined fairly. Understanding the



origins of his thinking greatly informs the results of it.

In chapter one, Belcher tells the story that led to the writing of this book. He recounts his sense that his local church lacked the authentic depth he was longing to see. Long discussions on what Christianity was all about with others who shared his angst led to greater authenticity. This in turn attracted more people who shared this sense of wanting something more. It was also clear that what was happening in his small group did not really seem to fit the traditional church setting.

When he began to question his church's lack of authenticity, Belcher never thought his concern would be so widespread beyond his local context. But it was not long before he met others who shared his concerns. Most of those he connected with at various emerging church conferences. In that sense, Belcher was part of the emerging church scene and was an insider.

But that did not last. While agreeing with much of the criticism of the traditional church, Belcher felt the emerging conversation created generational segregation, lacked deep enough roots, failed to have enough connection to a larger group and did not focus enough on the cross, forgiveness and grace. This made him feel like an outsider. He was left wondering where he fit; neither the emerging or traditional church had a complete enough picture. This led to the "Deep Church" idea.

If you are new to all this emerging church stuff, you are probably wondering what the emerging church is exactly. Belcher tackles that question in the second chapter. It should be noted that defining the emerging church is not an easy task. While tempting to do so, it is too simplistic to define the emerging church as the next new thing. This does not seem to be simply a variation on a seeker model. Most emerging church people critique the seeker movement just as vigorously as they do traditional churches.

So how does one define the emerging church? The best way to define it is to look at what it protests against. As a result of Belcher's research, he proposes seven main categories of protest that emerging church people have with the traditional church. These are: captivity to Enlightenment rationalism, a narrow view of salvation, belief before belonging, uncontextualized worship, ineffective preaching, weak ecclesiology, tribalism. This does help to begin to define the emerging church; those who read this book and are coming from a traditional church background are encouraged to remember the old adage, "If the shoe fits, wear it". Alongside those categories of protest, Belcher proposes and defines three main groups within the emerging church: Relevants, Reconstructionists and Revisionists. These are helpful and are based mostly on Ed Stetzer's work.<sup>1</sup>

While those who are new to the emerging church conversation might be tempted to ignore the emerging church, Belcher reminds his readers that they should not ignore a group that includes brothers and sisters in Christ. Instead,

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006).

he says the emerging church needs to be explored in order to learn from it, to refute it and to allow for meaningful dialogue. Belcher wants to caution his traditional church readers not to reduce the emerging church to one or two people or to some popular event that is easy to ridicule. At the same time, his emerging church readers are called to recognize the variety and diversity in traditional churches, including the good found there as well.

In chapter 3 Belcher lays the groundwork for his third way, “Deep Church”, or as he also calls it, “Mere Christianity”. He says that in order to move forward as the body of Christ, we need some ground for unity that is broad enough to include Christians from many places and cultures but not so broad that we lose orthodox beliefs. He proposes Robert Greer’s two-tier system: the top tier is comprised of creeds of the early church that are the test of orthodoxy; the bottom tier is made up of the distinctives of the various church groups. The ground for unity is the top tier, while grace is extended on the bottom tier.

Belcher proposes living out a third way is possible when churches remain true to and study deeply the top tier, while allowing for diversity and exploration at the bottom tier. Belcher hopes the third way will take the best of both traditional and emerging, while critiquing both as well, so that the Church can move forward in health and vitality.

In the second part of the book, Belcher gives greater depth to what the “Deep Church” is all about. The chapters are: “Deep Truth”, “Deep Evangelism”, “Deep Gospel”, “Deep Worship”, “Deep Preaching”, “Deep Ecclesiology” and “Deep Culture”. While each of these chapters could be a book or more on its own, Belcher does capture the essence of each topic quite well. He does not shy away from the controversial topics, and he willingly critiques both emerging and traditional viewpoints.

Belcher uses a three part approach in each chapter. He begins by examining an emerging church author who has either created the largest stir in traditional circles or who has explained the emerging position on that topic best. He then examines a key traditional author who has “pushed back” on this topic. There are various authors on both sides including Brian McLaren, D.A. Carson, Doug Pagitt, Tony Jones, Kevin DeYoung and John MacArthur. The third part of each chapter is Belcher’s attempt to critique both the emerging and traditional authors as well as to propose his third way. This often includes the “best” parts of both the emerging and traditional streams.

In his conclusion, Belcher offers seven suggestions for becoming a “Deep Church”. He is not proposing some specific model that you can follow. This is not a cookie-cutter proposal. Rather, these are broad-stroke ideas that he hopes will be a foundation for a “Deep Church” that will spread far and wide. Belcher hopes that this book will be an agent of moving towards greater unity.

While his readers might not always agree with Belcher’s assessment or critique of either emerging or traditional church thought, this book does stand

out as being different than many others on this subject. Most others attempt to defend their camp and critique the other thereby denying the possibility of a third way. Those who try to do what Belcher is doing are seen as sitting on the fence.

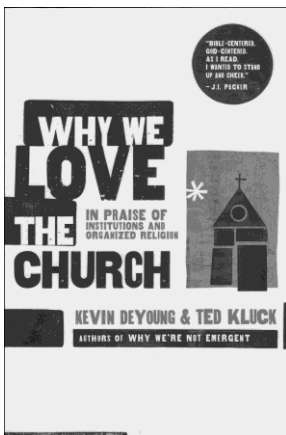
Sometimes neither group finds it satisfying when one tries to glean from opposing camps to provide a third way; that may be the case for many who will read this book. I am sure that some who read this book will “fly to the rescue” of their beloved author who has been critiqued or challenged by Belcher. Others will respond by claiming Belcher is simply living in a dream world.

In fact, this book may do two things: it may cause a defensive response from both emerging and traditional church people, and it may unite those who are unable to live in either group and are looking for a third way. The latter is a group Belcher is hoping in for the future. Either way, most people who read this book will be challenged by it. Are you interested in seeing what a third way might look like? This is as good a place as any to start.

*Reviewed by Albert J. Kooy, who is the youth pastor at the Charlottetown Christian Reformed Church, Prince Edward Island. Formerly Albert was a youth pastor in Ontario, where he had also taught at a Christian high school in the Toronto area. He is married and has six children and is a student at Haddington House.*



***Why We Love the Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion.* Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck. Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009, 234 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8024-5837-7**



*Why We Love The Church: In Praise of Institutions and Organized Religion* is written by two young men, Kevin DeYoung, the pastor, and Ted Kluck, a layman, at University Reformed Church in Lansing, Michigan. They have written two books in response to the emergent church movement. This is the second; the first book is *Why We're Not Emergent (By Two Guys Who Should Be)*.<sup>1</sup>

The format of *Why We Love the Church* consists of a theological chapter by DeYoung followed by a more chatty, human-interest chapter by Kluck. DeYoung says, “Come for the logic; stay

<sup>1</sup> Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We're Not Emergent (By Two Guys Who Should Be)* (Chicago: Moody, 2008).

for the laughs” (p. 18).

In reviewing this, we learn that De Young directs the book to four kinds of people:

- 1) *The Committed*: DeYoung would like to encourage the faithful to keep going to church.
- 2) *The Disgruntled*: Some people are still going to church but are not happy. DeYoung and Kluck want to show them that this frustration may be out of proportion to the offence, and it may be misguided.
- 3) *The Waffling*: This group of people is dissatisfied. They are considering dropping out of church to experience churchless Christianity. DeYoung and Kluck want to show them that this would be biblically unfaithful and harmful for their souls.
- 4) *The Disconnected*: These are the church-leavers who are looking for God in other ways. The authors hope they will read *Why We Love The Church* with an open mind. (p. 15)

He sets forth his reasons for why people don't love the church:

- 1) *The Missiological*: Many Christians feel the church has lost its way, is not growing and is ignoring community problems; young people are dropping out. These people think the church has tried and failed.
- 2) *The Personal*: Many outsiders feel that the church is filled with hypocrites who are judgmental and against others; many insiders feel personally wounded and unhappy.
- 3) *The Historical*: The authors feel that some people look back to the early church, compare our failures and mistakes, and abandon today's church.
- 4) *The Theological*: The emerging church does not want organization or structure. They say that the more we can move away from man-made doctrines and rituals, the closer we will be to knowing God. (pp. 16-18)

Some samples of what DeYoung addresses under the missiological are: “How should we respond if our church is losing members?” “Are we doing something wrong?” New emergent books say we are. DeYoung points to the New Testament and quotes Matthew 7:14, “The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few.” He continues, “There is simply no biblical teaching to indicate that church size is the measure of success” (p. 31). He goes on to quote Lesslie Newbigin, a renowned missiologist, on the subject of church growth. He speaks of the early church with seriousness and the urgency to warn people that they “must appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 10). In conclusion Newbigin says, “. . . but this nowhere appears as either an anxiety or an enthusiasm about the numerical growth of the church” (p. 32). DeYoung goes on to say that smallness is not a badge of honor. Are small churches making the unbeliever feel welcome and at home? He asks whether we are getting in the way of gospel.

Some criticisms and ideals from emerging church leaders include: the church's lack of purpose and mission, the over aggressiveness of evangelism, and the conviction that blessing is the best strategy. There is a huge social agenda in the church. The emphasis is on the poor, AIDS, the homeless and the environment. DeYoung thinks these are all important causes but says, ". . . it is absolutely biblically and eternally necessary that we verbally tell people the gospel and call people to faith and repentance in Jesus Christ" (p. 48). He further points out that many traditional churches have their own social program that they carry out faithfully.

### **Now let us look at Ted Kluck's contribution to this work:**

In his introduction, Ted Kluck says he has already written "a what you're doing stinks book" and he is not doing it again. However, he does mention several emerging church writers and makes some funny and rather sarcastic comments. He sees American culture being mixed in with Christianity in the postmodern world. Kluck mentions George Barna's *Revolution*,<sup>2</sup> in which two golfers on Sunday discuss the grandeur of the overlooking mountains as God's handiwork. Kluck understands the point but this is not a church substitute. Two other authors mentioned, Chris Seay and Leonard Sweet, wrote respectively *The Gospel According to Tony Soprano*<sup>3</sup> and *The Gospel According To Starbucks*.<sup>4</sup> Kluck does not feel that the Mafia guy, Tony Soprano, puts him on the road to sanctification nor does he believe that conversation over Starbucks' coffee compares to reading about the Christ of the Scriptures. He, Ted Kluck, needs church.

### **Conclusion:**

I have found *Why We Love The Church* a more mature piece of writing than *Why We're Not Emergent*. The critics have wide-ranging views on *Why We Love The Church*. On the positive side, J. I. Packer says, "Bible-centered, God-centered, and demonstrably mature, they win the exchange hands down. As I read, I wanted to stand up and cheer." On the negative side, Bill Kinnon is very critical of this book. Ultimately I think you will have to read it and make up your own mind.

I feel that DeYoung upholds the church and debates with emergent leaders, especially in assessing the church and looking back into the early Church. Kluck's work is a little sarcastic but his heart is in the right place.

I think that the emergent cause in some of its expressions is the old liberalism although some is actually quite conservative. It is important to read outside of this book to get a truer picture of the real situation in the church

<sup>2</sup> See George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Chris Seay, *The Gospel According to Tony Soprano: An Unauthorized Look into the Soul of Tv's Top Mob Boss and His Family* (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant, 2002).

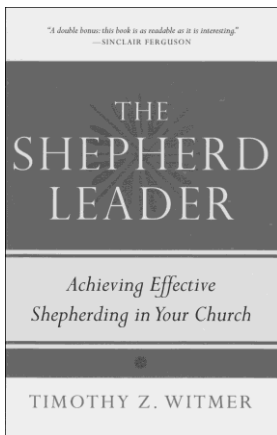
<sup>4</sup> Leonard Sweet, *The Gospel According to Starbucks: Living with a Grande Passion* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2007).

and to understand the scope of those with whom DeYoung and Kluck are interacting.

*Reviewed by Mrs. Elizabeth A. Underhay of Charlottetown, PEI. Elizabeth studied at Prince of Wales College, Queen's University and Teacher's College, Ottawa. She is an avid reader and committed Christian and has been involved in various writing projects.*



***The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church.* Timothy Z. Witmer. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010, 268 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-59638-131-5**



Before reading this book, I could not help but notice that so many of the book endorsements on its front and back covers claimed it is very useful and practical for the church today. While I was not calling into question the integrity of those comments, I admit to being skeptical since sometimes what church leaders think of as being practical is often not all that practical. While you will need to read this book to come to your own conclusion, I am more than willing to add my agreement to the others' assessment. If you are looking for a book to work through individually, as a group or as a church leadership group, this book provides much food for thought and many practical suggestions

for church leadership.

This book is very clearly organized into three major sections. Part one, consisting of chapters one to four, is the foundation Witmer constructs for his claim that the Bible teaches there ought to be elders who lead the church. In part two, rather than remaining on a more theoretical level, Witmer uses chapters five through eight to provide some practical insights into what elders should be doing. He calls it a “comprehensive matrix for ministry” that includes a macro and micro approach in four key areas: knowing, feeding, leading and protecting the sheep. His final section of the book deals with the practical implementation of a shepherding model.

In chapters one and two, Witmer provides his case for shepherding as the model for church leadership from the Old and New Testaments respectively. He works through various Bible passages dealing with main characters, such as Moses and David, and also gives considerable time to the shepherd passages in Ezekiel. In the NT chapter, he focuses on Christ as the Good Shep-

herd Who then trains and empowers under-shepherds, the apostles, to be the ongoing shepherds of His flock.

Chapter three is an historical summary of church leadership from the early New Testament church to the nineteenth century, focusing on the early church, then Cyprian and others who were the source of why leadership moved from plurality of elders to governing bishops and professional clergy only. He skips to the Reformation after that and presents a brief summary of various “wings” of the Protestant Reformation and their views on church leadership. Witmer’s summary makes it clear that there was a fair amount of difference in the Protestant church over who should lead, what role leaders should have and what the qualifications ought to be. He makes the observation that in the history of the church, the church suffers or flourishes depending on whether its leadership is living out of the biblical framework for church leadership.

In chapter four, Witmer attempts to provide a biblical foundation for the authority of elders in the church. While he challenges the present dislike in Western cultures of anything to do with authority, he carefully argues that authority is not a negative concept but rather one that is to be used for the good of the church and its members. Witmer challenges his readers to understand authority as something given by God to leaders to use for blessing and serving, not lording it over others. While the author decries the postmodern mindset against authority, he recognizes that abuse of authority has most likely fed that reaction, especially within the Emerging Church. His call for a balanced view that calls elders to use authority with compassion challenges all of us.

Chapter five begins the second section of the book in which Witmer presents the four key things elders need to do as shepherds of the flock. These are knowing, feeding, leading and protecting the sheep. This chapter focuses on what it means to “know” the sheep. The macro part of knowing the sheep is keeping accurate membership roles and having a good handle on the strengths, weaknesses, abilities and opportunities of the congregation. The micro strategy for knowing the sheep includes the goal of having the elders getting to know the sheep personally, splitting the membership up for each elder to focus on a group as well as specific strategies for regular contact, meaning more than once-a-year visits.

The next chapter covers “feeding” the sheep. The macro components here are the public ministry of the Word, Christian education classes and curriculum as well as the administration of the sacraments. Witmer does give a fair amount of space in promoting verse-by-verse exegetical preaching. He presents many reasons for preaching this way, including the fact that this preaching requires a long period of time to cover the entire counsel of God. While he sees this as a good reason for a long tenure for a minister, I am not sure this kind of diet will be balanced enough, especially for new or young Christians. On the micro side of feeding, Witmer stresses the need for discipleship, mentoring and the need for elders to give special attention to fami-



lies, particularly fathers. This is a very good reminder of a neglected part of church ministry.

Chapter seven focuses on the work of “leading” the congregation. I think Witmer is right on here in his critique that most churches’ elders consider this as the bulk of their task, rather than one part of a bigger task. On the macro level, this leading includes vision casting, providing clear insight in the mission and purpose of the church, making bigger ministry decisions and creating a structure that allows this leadership to connect with the various parts of church ministry. On the micro level, Witmer gives the challenge to elders to be examples for the flock in their own lives and in providing biblical counsel for the day-to-day struggles of life.

“Protecting” the sheep is the theme of chapter 8. Here Witmer takes on the topic of discipline and caring for the sheep. This chapter’s macro strategy includes publicly instructing the congregation about church discipline as well as educating them in how to identify the “wolves”. Witmer spends considerably more time explaining his ideas about the micro protecting of the flock. These include private warnings and admonition as well as a large section on how to deal with sheep who are leaving the church quietly through the “back door”.

Chapters nine to eleven make up the third section of the book that is even more of a “how-to” practical set of scenarios and applications of his four-part matrix mentioned above. Chapter 9 focuses on what he calls “seven essential elements” for elders. Witmer says that an effective shepherding ministry must be: 1) Biblical, 2) Systematic, 3) Comprehensive, 4) Relational, 5) Knowing, Feeding, Leading and Protecting, 6) include Accountability, 7) include Prayer. Each of the seven includes an “Action Plan” and some of them are quite extensive. Most of this section does not consist of theoretical ideas but practical suggestions for elders. Section 4 also includes some discussion of the role of deacons in this system.

Chapter ten, entitled “Implications of Having a Shepherding Ministry”, tackles the topics of elder qualifications, selection and training. Witmer includes discussion of how to move from a different model to a shepherding one in existing churches as well as the issue of term or life eldership (he also includes an appendix by John Murray on this topic). While Witmer clearly promotes life eldership, he does not give term eldership much of a hearing, leaving his reader with a rather lopsided view of this topic. He then proceeds to lay out various implications of a shepherding model for membership, church discipline and even church planting.

In chapter eleven, Witmer answers the question that he hopes people reading his book will be asking at this point, “How do we implement this shepherding model?” Well, Witmer provides a ten-step strategy for the elders, a four-step strategy to prepare the congregation and then ends with a reminder that setting a date to begin this model must make sense in light of doing the proper preparatory work needed to be able to make this model work. He even

includes some samples of resources in the appendices to help the elders with implementation.

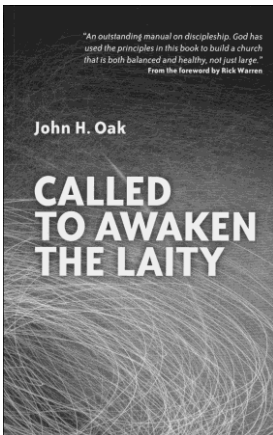
Witmer concludes his book with an exhortation and encouragement for elders, present and potential ones, to consider the importance of the work and the joy that being a shepherd can bring when the Chief Shepherd returns and you receive a “crown of glory that will never fade away”.

The author is Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia and minister of preaching at Crossroads Community Church in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania.

Overall, this book lives up to the claim that this is not a theoretical book about church leadership. While presenting biblical and historical arguments for an elder shepherding model, Witmer provides a book that will definitely be very useful for churches who are interested in following this model and who are looking for enough practical help in going from theory into practice. It would also be helpful for churches who would like to assess their present practice.

*Reviewed by Albert J. Kooy*

***Called to Awaken the Laity.* John H. Oak. Translated by Sam Ko and Jerry Vreeman. Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006, 319 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-84550-224-9**



*Called to Awaken the Laity* focuses on the biblical role of the laity and the need for the church to reform its thinking about ministry. This is a very significant topic to consider as many churches have embraced a distorted understanding of church ministry as including only the leaders of the church who are responsible for ministry. This book is written to present an alternative perspective of the ministry of the church that recognizes the reality that the laity are called to ministry themselves.

There are five sections to the book. In the opening section, “Today’s Church and the Laity”, Oak first speaks about today’s church and focuses particularly on the Korean church, where so much revival has been reported. Oak refers to a lack of spiritual growth in contrast to numerical growth in Korean churches as of late and the sad fact that Korean churches are not seen to be different than the rest of society (pp. 20, 23). The writer also takes time to look back in church history to identify some factors that have plagued our understanding of the laity. He makes reference to the institutionalization of Christianity and the contribution of Bishop Cyprian, who used the term “laity” to refer to the general population in distinction

from the clergy and so created a two class church (p. 33). Oak concludes this section by stating that a proper relationship between clergy and laity will exist when it is recognized that the laity *is* the church (p. 46).

One quotation which Oak cites presents clearly his objective: "The first reformation took the word of God exclusively out of the hands of the clergy and put it in the hands of the people. The second reformation is to get the ministry exclusively out of the hands of the clergy and into the hands of the people, where it rightly belongs" (p. 27). This then is the foundational thought that prepares the way for the rest of the book, where the author will begin to discuss discipleship in the church.

In the second section, Oak considers the ministerial philosophy for equipping and developing a healthy church. A ministry philosophy is important because it is the driving force that explains what is the identity of the church and purpose for its existence (p. 51).

Concerning the matter of identity, Oak begins by arguing that while the Reformed doctrine of the church is valid, it is no longer adequately articulated today, because it does not fully reflect the calling of mission (p. 64). Some scholars have suggested that the Reformers' view of the church was insufficient to incorporate a mission mindset to the visible church (p. 65). Oak attempts to show the validity of these criticisms by referring to both Luther and Calvin's commentary on 1 Corinthians 12:28. Both Luther and Calvin differentiated the task of the apostles and the task of preacher by explaining that the preacher is focused on a particular church instead of the whole world (p. 66). Oak is not necessarily trying to attack either of the great Reformer's views of missions but rather to show how succeeding generations could think that they have fulfilled their pastoral task by only concerning themselves with shepherding their particular churches. This leads Oak to the consideration of the definition of the church. The church should not only be thought of as God's people called out of the world, but it must also be acknowledged that as God's people they are sent into the world as disciples of Christ (pp. 56, 61).

For Oak, the key to convincing the laity of their calling is found in the apostolicity of the church, the teachings of the apostles. Although the apostleship is unique and has ceased, their teachings and ministry remain. In dealing with apostolic succession, Oak is not thinking of the Roman Catholic notion of an individual pope inheriting the office of apostle. In radical contrast, Oak is saying that just as the teaching of the apostles is given to the entire church, so the ministry is given to the entire church and not to just a few individuals (p. 75). In Acts 2:4, Luke describes how the Holy Spirit did not distinguish the apostles from the rest of the disciples but came upon all 120 who were in the room (p. 84). The church exists for worship of the Triune God, to save the world and to equip and care for believers (p. 87-94). A ministry philosophy articulates how a church explains its identity and reason for existence (p. 51).

In the third section of the book, Oak turns to discipleship or what he calls the ministry strategy. He explains that to make disciples means more than “to evangelize”. The church is called to care for and train believers and so discipleship is concerned about the believer’s lifestyle (p. 103). Oak refers to this as the ministry strategy. The church trains believers so that they may be equipped to participate in the calling of ministry. The path of discipleship applies to all believers, although there can be degrees of difference in the lives of disciples (p. 119).

At this point, Oak discusses the concept of “disciple” and highlights three elements that are underscored in Jesus’ teaching and example. These include personal commitment, witnessing and servanthood (p. 123). In considering the topic of witnessing, Oak draws attention to the fact that the New Testament is strangely silent in terms of giving commands to believers to evangelize. While there are passages like Colossians 4:5-6 that deal with the importance of using opportunities and sharing the gospel, Oak is stressing that since evangelism is so vital to the church, it would seem natural that there would be a list of commands regarding it. The author makes this point to stress that witnessing is not something that believers are to be reluctant about, but by the urging of the Holy Spirit, it is an instinctive matter (p. 137).

Building from the focus of discipleship, the fourth section considers discipleship training. Oak highlights three tools that Jesus used to train his disciples: the Word of God, His own example and the disciple’s own experience (p. 195). Oak goes further to highlight six principles to determine good teaching material for discipleship training classes: the gospel needs to be alive; the material should be systematic; it needs to have application; it is important to note doctrinal distinctives; it needs to have a clear understanding of the ministry philosophy; and it needs to make use of the inductive method for learning (pp. 204-210). Oak stresses the importance of inductive learning to emphasize the changing of character, rather than just conveying knowledge (p. 229). Discipleship training is described and compared to coaches who equip and motivate athletes to compete (pp. 241-242).

In the final section of the book, Oak focuses on the ministry field in the heritage of the Korean church. The author points to several model churches that have been active in discipleship training (pp. 258-266). As throughout the entire book, Oak writes by looking back over twenty years of experience. He lists several helpful principles for discipleship training including the necessity of training, consistency, self-development, time management and energy (pp. 275-282).

The style of the book could be compared with how a painter may apply paint with the impact of the message coming through with each successive layer being applied. This being said, the book could have been shorter in order to convey the message. John Oak is pastor of SaRang Church, a mega church in South Korea, one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the world with 58,000 members. The reader will not miss Oak’s frequent reference to statistics and surveys in the book with many of the statistics at the end of the

book showing the effect that discipleship has had on SaRang Church (pp. 297-308). Alongside this, in a book that is intentionally challenging the common notions of the ministry of the church, it would have been beneficial if the author had spent more time addressing in detail questions that the reader would naturally raise and in particular some of the distorted views to avoid.

This is an ideal book for an adult Sunday school class as the message is obviously directed toward the entire church. The format of short chapters would also make this beneficial for group studies. Overall, the book successfully identifies a weakness that exists in many churches where it is assumed that the laity are faithful Christians when they simply gather for public worship on a regular basis. John Oak stresses the need for discipleship training for the laity who may not be called to *the* ministry but are still called to ministry. The reader will come away challenged by this book. While it may seem radical, there are questions that are raised in the book that require attention; such as how could the vast majority of the church be exempt from the apostolic calling that has been given to the church? (p. 80).

One detracting aspect of this book was the need for more editing. Unfortunately, authors' names are sometimes spelled incorrectly and on occasion book titles are inconsistent.

*Reviewed by Peter K. Aiken, a lay preacher who lives on Prince Edward Island. He is a graduate of the University of Prince Edward Island with a business degree and currently works for an investment firm and studies part-time at Hadlington House. He and his wife, Michelle, have one son.*



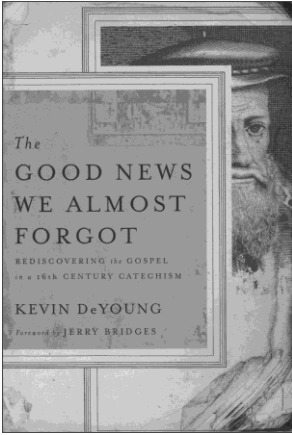
***The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Catechism.* Kevin DeYoung. Chicago: Moody, 2010, 252 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8024-5840-7**

Kevin DeYoung has given us an excellent twenty-first century exposition of a sixteenth century document. His exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism<sup>1</sup> provides a wonderful introduction to the riches of the gospel for those unfamiliar with the Reformed perspective of the Scriptures. At the same time, it is an excellent refresher course for those familiar with the great

---

<sup>1</sup> The Heidelberg Catechism was published in German in 1563 in the city of Heidelberg. It was commissioned by Elector Frederick III and was intended to serve as a tool for instructing youth, a guide for preachers and a document to unite the warring Protestant factions in Frederick's domain, i.e. the Palatinate. Zacharias Ursinus is usually taken as the principal author.

teachings of the Reformation legacy. He writes in a lively and engaging style, explaining the Catechism's teaching in a clear and straightforward manner. Using the Catechism, he brings the Bible to bear on the life of the



believer, the church and our present-day society and culture. I have preached through the Catechism several times, and I was not expecting to be so effectively challenged and encouraged to more faithfully follow Jesus.

The Heidelberg Catechism is divided into fifty-two “chapters” called Lord’s Days with each Lord’s Day containing questions and answers. Each chapter is about two to three pages and outlines the relevant Scripture passages, then explains and applies the teaching. It is amazing how much he packs into a small space. As he works his way through the theology of the Catechism, he never loses touch with Christ and the gospel.

DeYoung, although born, bred and ordained in the Reformed Church in America, works through the Catechism aware of the wider church, including other Reformed traditions. This becomes apparent at the beginning of his exposition as he undertakes Lord’s Day One, which takes him to the Catechism’s most famous question: “What is your only comfort in life and death?” The answer to this question, which focuses on the blessings the believer experiences from Christ, the Father and the Spirit, is cherished by those in the Dutch Reformed tradition. Apparently, the answer has been criticized by supporters of the Westminster Shorter Catechism’s equally famous question and answer. The criticism is that Heidelberg starts with man whereas Westminster starts with God. DeYoung loves the Heidelberg Catechism but does not respond defensively. Perceptively and productively, he comments: “In truth, both catechisms start in appropriate places. Heidelberg starts with grace. Westminster starts with glory. We’d be hard-pressed to think of two better words to describe the theme of biblical revelation” (p.21).

The Catechism is known for the warmth and personal character of its expression, and at times, for its poetic description of the great truths of Scripture. Lord’s Day Ten, which takes up God’s providence, is a good example of its poetic style, providing a wonderful dramatization of God’s sovereignty over all things. It is also a good example of DeYoung’s style. He takes up God’s sovereignty with sensitivity and pastoral concern but holds nothing back. Readers are not allowed to be so taken with the language that they miss what is being affirmed and what the Bible teaches. He comments: “Like most of us, the students [seminary ordinands] are much more at ease using passive language about God’s permissive will or comfortable generalities about God being ‘in control’ than they are about stating precisely and confidently to those in the midst of suffering ‘this has come from God’s fatherly hand’ ” (pp. 59-60).

The Catechism speaks in neutral or general terms at three key theological points. This makes for the possibility of different interpretations, but DeYoung takes the reader in the biblical direction. Heidelberg focuses on the organic relationship between Adam and his posterity. DeYoung expands the discussion to include the federal aspect of this relationship. Lord's Day Fifteen makes the statement: "Christ sustained in body and soul the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race." This could be understood as supporting a general atonement, but DeYoung takes us to particular redemption. The Catechism, having no question on election, avoids a direct discussion of the subject but does refer to it in passing. DeYoung will not let election go unnoticed and picks up on the Catechism's statement regarding the Church "as a community chosen for eternal life" and sets forth the unconditional character of God's choosing.

However, the Catechism is clear on one of today's controversial issues – justification – and sets forth the traditional Reformation view in considerable detail. DeYoung, aware of the contemporary debate, gives hearty endorsement to the traditional formulation, including imputation of the active obedience of Christ.

Heidelberg's statement on faith in Lord's Day Seven is prized by those in the Dutch Reformed tradition, and DeYoung is no exception, commenting: "The Catechism gives one of the best answers [on faith] you'll find anywhere" (p. 45). Adherents of the Westminster Standards may demur, noting among other things, a different understanding of the relationship of assurance to faith. However, I think that Westminster people will feel reasonably comfortable with his exposition of the Heidelberg's description of faith as "a deep-rooted assurance" (p. 46). He writes: "It [faith] is not arrogant, but it is confident. We should have mercy on those who doubt (Jude 22), but doubt is not the goal. We want a faith that is not constantly wandering and wondering but [is] sure and established" (p. 46).

The Catechism in Lord's Day Thirty-Three asks: "What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?" and answers: "Two things: the dying of the old self and the coming to life of the new self." I have always found this Lord's Day difficult to exposit. The terminology poses a challenge for the contemporary interpreter, and I was eager to see DeYoung's approach. Like other Heidelberg expositors, he takes conversion in a broad sense. He states: "The Bible talks about conversion in many different ways," and goes on to list eight things conversion means ranging from "repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21)" to "being resurrected with Christ into a new life (Rom. 6:3-4)" to "a change of ownership, from slaves of sin to slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18)" (p. 159). However, I prefer to take a more flexible approach to the terminology. In the contemporary context, I think it is better to understand conversion as repentance and faith, i.e. our response to the gospel in both an initial and ongoing sense, and explain "the dying of the old self" and "the coming to life of the new self" as they relate

to definitive and progressive sanctification.

Heidelberg spends considerable time on the sacraments and working through the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. DeYoung provides some very helpful material in these areas, and three items in particular caught my attention.

First, he is an enthusiastic proponent of infant baptism and provides an excellent explanation and summary of the biblical basis for the practice. For those having difficulty understanding and explaining why we put water on babies, I would suggest they study and use his outline. Even for those who may not agree with the author's position on baptism, he writes in an irenic and engaging manner.

Second, he disagrees with the Westminster Confession on the Fourth Commandment. He takes what he calls a "middle road" regarding the Fourth Commandment and states: "My view is somewhere between 'the Fourth Commandment doesn't apply anymore' and 'Sunday is the new Sabbath day.'" He sides with Heidelberg rather than Westminster, and he looks to Calvin rather than the Puritans for his abiding principles regarding the Sabbath.

Third, I found his comments on the petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" a perceptive antidote to much contemporary teaching on forgiveness. In particular, I was happy to read: "In one sense, we should forgive all those who sin against us. We should not seek their harm. We should pray for them and desire their good. But in another sense, forgiveness can be granted only to those who seek it. That is, while we should always be ready to forgive, unless the other party is willing to repent, forgiveness cannot reach its full bloom. Forgiveness implies the restoration of a relationship, and without repentance a broken relationship cannot be truly restored."

DeYoung concludes his work with a gem, an epilogue entitled "The Crust and the Core" (pp. 241-244). Here he argues for the necessity of Christians possessing a theological core "about who God is and what He has accomplished through Jesus Christ". This core should shape and motivate those who follow Jesus. At the same time, he warns of becoming crusty: arrogant, lacking balance, judgmental and isolationist. This epilogue provides an excellent guide for all those committed to serious theological study of the Bible.

I highly recommend this book.

*Reviewed by Rev. Howard M. McPhee, the former pastor of the Springdale Christian Reformed Church, Bradford, Ontario, where he served for seventeen years.*





***Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition.* James K. A. Smith. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010, 134 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-58743-294-1**

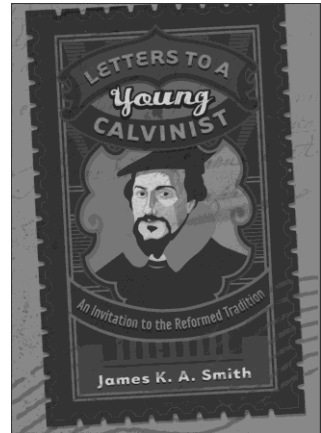
This book comes on the recent crest of attention given to Calvin and the “new Calvinism”, no doubt echoing the five-hundredth anniversary of Calvin’s birth in 2009 and the attention-making article in *Time* magazine. There certainly has been a publishing boom, if nothing else, connected with all of this! I will leave it to others to debate the benefit of the numerical increase.

The author of *Letters to a Young Calvinist*, James K. A. Smith, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, came from the Assemblies of God (and prior to that, Plymouth Brethren) to the Reformed family. With honesty, he acknowledges his entrance into the Reformed world may not have been overly gracious to others outside it and was marked by pride and unfortunate theological reductionism. Hence, these letters were written to “Jesse”, a fictitious character who stands both for the author as a “younger self” as well as for many young men and women in Los Angeles who were on that journey with the author. The letters are to be pastoral, inviting and introductory. Thus they are theological but are also about spiritual formation.

There are twenty-three letters averaging four pages each. Letter II, “On Religious Pride”, and Letter III, “Proud to Be a Calvinist”, are excellent challenges to the spiritual pride rooted in us. Some will take offence. Smith writes with boldness here: “This type of polemical religious pride almost seems like a kind of genetic defect of the Reformed tradition, one that threatens to perpetuate itself” (p. 8). Thus the letters certainly try to point us in the right spiritual direction while learning theology.

The style is obviously easy-going, conversational almost, but the author covers many key aspects of Reformed theology. The doctrine of God’s grace is introduced very early (Letter IV) and so is *semper reformanda* (in Letter VII). The author exposes his readers to much by way of the historical theology of the Reformed tradition, not just the systematic. He endeavours to balance both and at the same time tries to keep the study of theology and spiritual formation wedded together.

I found Letter X, “To Be Reformed Is to Be Catholic”, most interesting. The writer says he is worried that Jesse’s Calvinist friends are narrowing the tradition and the church. “So if I tease you that ‘to be Reformed is to be catholic,’ in all seriousness I don’t mean to be a tease. It’s just that sometimes I



worry that your Calvinist friends are trying to ‘out-Calvinist’ John Calvin!” (p. 47).

I will now just briefly summarize the remaining letters. The author extols Kuyper’s world-and-life view to Jesse and unpacks this. He commends more the “continental” Reformed tradition than Westminster, although W. G. T. Shedd certainly receives high praise. The current growth of Reformed Baptists and certain institutions in America do not come in for immense praise even though certain names do such as Piper, Driscoll or Moehler (pp. 61-63). Perhaps this is in part the author showing where he himself has “landed” within the Reformed family. It is interesting that all five writers giving book endorsement on the back cover are paedo-baptists.

I enjoyed the style. There is a creativity and freshness here. It certainly does explore the riches of the Reformed tradition. Personally, I do not like the word “Calvinist”, but I realize not all share that view.

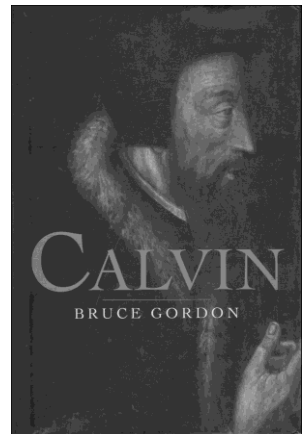
*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

## Historical Theology

***Calvin*. Bruce Gordon. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009, 416 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-300-12076-9**

Bruce Gordon's biography of Calvin adds to the growing list of biographies of the sixteenth century Reformer published in recent years. While Gordon covers the same general events in Calvin's life story as the others, he presents many additional salient features both of the historical context and of Calvin's life that provide a richer and deeper understanding of this outstanding servant of God. This is clearly the most complete and elaborate account to date of the man, his actions, and his work. Gordon wants us to understand Calvin as the complex Protestant Reformer that he was in the full range of his activities as preacher and teacher, church leader, advocate for the gospel, Protestant ecumenical activist, and gifted biblical interpreter, theologian, and apologist for the Reformed understanding of the Christian faith. Gordon also provides many additional significant historical details, not found in previous biographies, of the social, political, and religious factors at work in Geneva, other Swiss cities, and other European nations, notably Germany and France. These are important to provide a complete portrait of the Reformer who rose to the position of Protestant leader and theologian influencing people and nations throughout Europe.

Gordon narrates Calvin's life and accomplishments from his early life in Noyon, France, to his death at the age of fifty-five in Geneva after three decades of ministry. The range of information that Gordon includes is sizeable, yet he keeps the narrative moving in an interesting and lively fashion. He takes us through the many events and central characters surrounding Calvin's conversion in Paris, his ministry in Geneva, relations with Swiss, Lutheran and other Reformers, the politics of Swiss cities, and the religious reform movements in European nations, notably France. Gordon avoids the danger of overloading the narrative with details; he presents the material in a manner that ably illuminates Calvin's actions and writings in relation to these persons



and events.

Gordon's account fills out the details of many of the events in Calvin's life in a manner that provides a better understanding than previous biographies. Let me give two examples. First, Gordon notes that when Calvin first came to Geneva, he was under the influence of Farel, from whom he absorbed a harsh polemical tone in dealing not only with people still retaining Roman Catholic beliefs but also with other Reformers. When Calvin and Farel were banished from Geneva in 1538, they were separated, Calvin ending up in Strasbourg and Farel in Neuchatel. In Strasbourg, Calvin was disciplined as a pastor and teacher by Bucer, and in the process he learned to temper his harsh tone and to become more moderate and conciliatory in dealing with others. Later, upon his return to Geneva, while Calvin remained a good friend of Farel for the rest of his life, he considered Farel's tone and language to be too harsh and oppositional. Calvin's own language moved toward a less confrontational style.

A second example of insight that Gordon provides concerns the problems that Calvin experienced over the matter of the Lord's Supper. Gordon indicates that these troubles had much to do with the fact that Geneva was under the authority of officials in Berne. It was the directive of the Berne officials to the Geneva Council in 1538 that communion could not be withheld from anyone that led to Calvin and Farel's banishment when they refused to obey. In addition, in subsequent years of Calvin's ministry, the Bernese officials promoted the Zwinglian view of the Lord's Supper and harassed Calvin and others who held to a real (spiritual) presence of Christ in the Supper. This caused ongoing problems for Calvin as he attempted to promote unity with the Lutherans, who held to the real presence of Christ in communion. Given views advocated by the Bernese officials, the Lutherans tended generally to see the Swiss view as Zwinglian, that is, as a mere memorial of Christ's atoning death. Gordon notes that Calvin was frequently required to distinguish his view from the Zwinglian view.

In the "Preface" Gordon indicates that his work on Calvin's life has convinced him that Calvin's greatness was due to "his brilliance as a thinker and writer, and, above all, his ability to interpret the Bible" (vii). Calvin's intellectual abilities enabled him to formulate systematically the message of God's love for humanity in Scripture, while drawing upon the teachings of ancient, medieval, and contemporary writers. His ever evolving intellect drew on his ongoing study of Scripture and on the range of Christian authors to deepen his insight into the Christian faith both in his commentaries and his various editions of the *Institutes*. This is also evident in Calvin's numerous theological and polemical works.

Yet, it is at this point that I note a major weakness in the biography. Even while Gordon does recognize the brilliance and power of Calvin's intellectual development as a Reformer, I do not think that he notes the full significance of the role of Calvin's theological development in his actions as a Protestant Reformer. In fairness to Gordon he does note at various points in

Calvin's life his major written works and the significance of their content: 1536 and 1539 *Institutes*, the commentaries on Romans (the first one) and other biblical books, the 1559 *Institutes*, and the various theological and polemical works. Yet, I do not think that Gordon's comments give sufficient weight to the impact of Calvin's growing theological understanding of the Christian faith on his leadership and actions as the leading Reformer of Geneva, and of the whole of Europe. Gordon seems more interested in the style of Calvin's prose and in his concise and elegant French than in the content of his biblical and theological works. While one has to understand Calvin in the context of the circumstances of his day and the key figures in European Christianity, one must also see Calvin's actions and influence in the light of his maturing theological understanding of the Christian faith. This biography, it seems to me, is weak in this area.

Also, Gordon clearly wants to avoid an account of Calvin's life that slips into hagiography. He presents a candid account of Calvin's sins and weaknesses as they surface in his dealings with fellow Reformers and with his opponents. But in presenting Calvin as a human figure, it seems to me that Gordon overdoes the references to Calvin's faults. In the preface Calvin is described as "a benevolent father and bully" with his friends, demanding absolute loyalty from them and no opposition. With his opponents Calvin could be "vindictive and even cruel". The references to these faults in Calvin's life are piled up to such an extent that one is left with quite a negative view of the man. In general, I question whether these negative qualities are self-evident in Calvin's writings; numerous times they appear to be Gordon's impressions of Calvin's tone in his writings. In addition, it seems to me that Gordon fails to bring some important factors to bear on the use of strong language in Calvin's writings: the language used in the sixteenth century especially in polemical works was much stronger than in our day; matters of faith and practice were life and death issues in that day; and like all brilliant men, Calvin did not suffer fools lightly, pointing out error or ignorance in his opponents with sharp rhetoric and arguments. While Calvin was certainly not perfect, it is questionable whether Calvin's negative qualities were present to the extent and degree that Gordon maintains.

In addition to these two major weaknesses in the biography, I note several other minor problems: Gordon's attempt to read a Barthian view of Scripture into Calvin (p. 104-5), his numerous references to Calvin's self-understanding as a prophet to his day without defining the different senses of the term "prophet", and a criticism of Calvin for misreading the situation of Protestant growth in France in his final years. Concerning the latter point, one can hardly fault Calvin for not anticipating the violent actions of the French Protestants, the weak resolve of the Protestant nobility, and the failure of the talks between French Protestants and Catholics to achieve compromise.

Yet, even with the above weaknesses, this biography is a notable

achievement, providing the most comprehensive account of the life of Calvin to date. Gordon's research has clearly provided a better understanding of many significant features of Calvin's life, to name a few: the circle of humanists and Protestant Reformers in Paris in the 1530s; the politics of the Swiss cities of Berne, Basle, and Geneva; Calvin's reforming work in Geneva in the context of the various religious, social, and political forces; his relations with other Protestant leaders; his numerous attempts (along with others) to forge positive ecumenical relations with the Lutherans; his ongoing battles with opponents, such as Bolsec and Castillo; his influence for religious reform on the rest of Europe; and his efforts to further the Protestant cause in France. In these matters, as well as many others, Gordon provides much rich information on this great Swiss Reformer. Thus, this biography deserves a careful reading by those who desire a deeper understanding of the life of Calvin in the context of the ecclesiastical, political, and cultural events of his day. The author is Professor of Reformation History, Yale Divinity School and certainly one of the world's foremost Reformation scholars today.

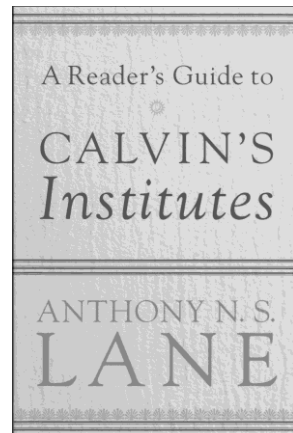
*Reviewed by Guenther ("Gene") H. Haas, Professor of Religion and Theology, Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario and the author of The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics (1997). He earned his M. Div. and M. Th. at Covenant Theological Seminary and the D. Th. from University of Toronto. Dr. Haas is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America.*



***A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes.* Anthony N. S. Lane. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009, 174 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-3731-3**

Anthony Lane has long been a student of Calvin and has gained high respect as an international authority on the Reformer's theology. He has previously edited, along with Hilary Osborne, an abridged version of the Henry Beveridge translation of the *Institutes*.<sup>1</sup>

*A Reader's Guide* is just that, a guide. It is not intended for use instead of the *Institutes*. Though the book is keyed to McNeill-Battles, it can be used with other translations but then the references to the wording, to specific pages, to paragraphs and to the footnotes would not be relevant.



<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christian Religion*, eds. Tony Lane and Hilary Osborne, orig. 1986 (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

Apart from the introductory material, Lane has divided the four books of the *Institutes* into thirty-two portions. From each of these he has selected a number of suggested readings, on average a total of about eighteen pages. *A Reader's Guide* provides short summaries of these suggested readings which highlight points of special interest or value. There are a total of eighty chapters in the two volumes of Calvin's work. *A Reader's Guide* has thirty-two. However, this does not mean that it (*A Reader's Guide*) is incomplete, as one of its chapters may cover several in the *Institutes*. Having this little volume by one's side as one studies Calvin may be considered the next best thing to having a tutor. In fact it would be very useful to the tutor himself as he teaches.

At first it takes a little time to find the appropriate place indicated in the *Guide*. For example, the twenty-first chapter is entitled, "The True Nature of Christian Freedom". The selected readings in the *Institutes* are found in book 3, chapter 19, sections 1 to 5 and 7 to 15. We are directed to the place as follows: 3.19.1-5, 7-15.

Lane suggests four options for readers:

- 1) Read only the selected material and my brief summaries of the rest.
- 2) Read only the selected material and use Battles' *Analysis of the Institutes*<sup>2</sup> as a summary of the rest.
- 3) Concentrate on the selected material but skim through the rest.
- 4) Read the whole of the *Institutes*. (p. 10)

Every chapter in *A Reader's Guide* itself has a short introduction, often consisting of only a sentence or two. Following this the reader is presented with questions (usually one to three) and then brief, perceptive summaries of the selected sections in the *Institutes*. These summaries are often only a line or a few lines in length but occasionally may go to as much as a third or even half a page. *A Reader's Guide* is intended to make the student think and evaluate what he reads in Calvin. By the same token, one may assess Lane's own comments. For example, we question whether he accurately reflects Calvin's view of Original Sin. Although the statements in the *Institutes* are somewhat obscure regarding the corporate guilt involved in the first sin, it is reading too much into Calvin's statements to suggest that he dismissed it or rejected it.<sup>3</sup> Again, on page 98 he expresses the opinion that Calvin held to a "universal" rather than a "limited" atonement. This interpretation of the Reformer is well known but, we believe, will not bear close analysis.<sup>4</sup> It should be kept in mind that he was writing not only as a theologian but as a pastor.

---

<sup>2</sup> F. L. Battles, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin*, orig. 1980 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> See Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, orig. 1862 (London: Banner of Truth, 1967), 371-379. See also John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

<sup>4</sup> See Cunningham, *The Reformers*, 395-402.

Lane, in *A Reader's Guide*, refers briefly to the Reformer's view of assurance. He says, ". . . Calvin holds that true faith is assurance of my salvation. But does this mean that anyone who has doubts has no true faith? No" (p. 97). This observation has merit. The Reformers, including Calvin, have often been faulted for teaching a doctrine of assurance that some real Christians could not claim to come up to in their own experience. But has Calvin been partly misunderstood? Although in book 3, chapter 2, section 7 of the *Institutes* Calvin gives a definition of faith which includes assurance, in sections 17 and 18 of the same chapter his comments hardly sustain the position stated in section 7. His controversy with the unreformed church included a difference over the matter of assurance, and he may have tended to overstate his position; but it is to be noted that there is in any case a paradox. Faith involves claiming Christ as one's own Saviour. Yet since faith is not mere assent but trust and commitment, there can at times be questions in a sincere and real believer as to whether he has true trust and a real saving relationship with Christ. Lane obviously holds that Calvin was fully aware of this fact. This suggests that perhaps there is need of a better assessment of the Reformer's teaching on assurance than has generally been accepted.

The chapter on prayer in *A Reader's Guide* is a reminder to us that the *Institutes* is not simply an academic work but has a rich devotional tone, a feature which other writers on theology could do well to emulate. On the other hand, one wonders why Lane considers that Calvin's view, that the best works of believers fall short of perfection, may by some be justifiably regarded as a "hard" position (p. 117).

Chapter 1 of book 4 in the *Institutes* is reviewed in chapter 25 of *A Reader's Guide*. Here we have a discussion of the true Church and the important distinction between its visible and invisible aspects. This is a subject that is all too little understood. The two marks of the Church and its discipline are also discussed here, and Lane provides his excellent succinct summaries of Calvin's teaching on all of these subjects. Lane makes some very perceptive comments here which are most engaging:

Recognize what Calvin does not say. The Anabaptists and some of Calvin's followers included discipline among the marks. Calvin strongly believed in church discipline (4.11-12) and put it into practice in Geneva, but he deliberately excluded it from the marks of the true church. This was because that would open the door for folks to break away from the church on the grounds that the discipline was too slack for their taste . . . (pp. 140-141)

In an age when the church is often largely theologically illiterate on the one hand and on the other frequently manifesting, even among the more orthodox, a mainly academic or philosophical interest in doctrine, a solid acquaintance with Calvin could prove a real corrective. Lane has made it easier to profit from Calvin's classic work. However, it needs to be said that the reading of it will require application and discipline. Many spend a few hours



or a few days in a book and enjoy as they say “a good read”. To gain a tolerable acquaintance with the *Institutes* will require weeks or months. It would be time well spent and *A Reader’s Guide* should be of much assistance.

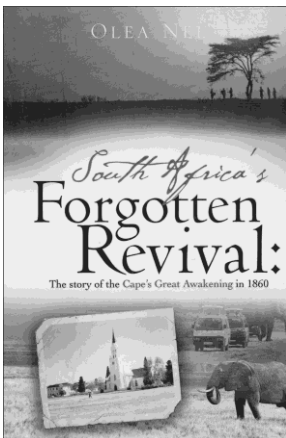
In a general comment on Calvin, Lane observes that, “He is the only writer ever to belong without question both to the first rank of theologians and to the first rank of commentators” (p. 16). At the beginning of the *Guide*, he provides an interesting account of the various editions (five in all) of the *Institutes*, all in the Reformer’s lifetime.

A defect in the McNeill-Battles translation is indicated in *A Reader’s Guide*. We are informed that, “By no means all of Calvin’s biblical references are found in MB [McNeill-Battles], and by no means all of the references found there are from Calvin” (p. 24). The same criticism is made with regard to the citation of patristic and medieval authors. This is not to say that these references are not relevant and valuable enough. It is simply pointed out that the reader is left with no way of knowing whether a particular reference is by Calvin himself.

*Reviewed by Rev. William R. Underhay, a retired minister of the Free Church of Scotland, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Rev. Underhay is a graduate of Victoria University College, University of Toronto and the Free Church College, Edinburgh.*



***South Africa’s Forgotten Revival: The story of the Cape’s Great Awakening in 1860.* Olea Nel. Canberra, Australia: Olive Twig Books, 2010, 223 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-646-52689-8**



The year 2010 is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Awakening at the Cape in Africa. This awakening has received much less attention than the revival in approximately the same period in New York, the United States; in Belfast, Northern Ireland; or in Wales. Thus it is very good to see Olea Nel’s book appear in print for this anniversary. It appears the book first began as a private venture but now has come under the Olive Twig Books label in Australia; this will hopefully increase its sales and distribution.

The book title captures well the author’s thesis, that this is a neglected and forgotten awakening; Nel’s subtitle also captures well her methodology, *The story of the Cape’s Great Awakening in 1860*. She writes in her preface, “I have attempted to piece the data together in such a way that a discernable

picture emerges that also tells a story” (p xii). The book has much information yet does read as “a story”, which I believe will make the book very accessible to a wide range of readers.

The author knows Afrikaans very well and is a trained linguist. She was born in Cape Town and lived in Wellington; she and her husband now live in Canberra, Australia. Thus she has a good background to open up this subject. This background was very helpful to me because I enjoy reading on the book’s theme but have often regretted that I do not know Afrikaans – so many books and documents I cannot easily access.

The book is divided into three divisions: part one, the setting; part two, the revival; and part three, the aftermath. The author helps us to understand life in the Cape by including a background chapter, “A colony run by a company”.

Something I greatly appreciated was the fact that the author included a chapter each on Andrew Murray, Nicolaas Hofmeyr and Gottlieb van der Lingen. For readers outside of South Africa, these three chapters are most valuable. Nel then proceeds location by location to tell the story of the revival’s spread from Worcester and beyond over several chapters. These are highly fascinating accounts, but a map or two would have been most helpful for the reader who may not know the locations of the Cape which are mentioned in the book. I also did wonder why there were no illustrations of any of the chief leaders whose stories were given.

The author does not limit her research or writing to 1860-1862. Nel also includes the “aftermath” section (1862-1875) – covering the issues of division in Paarl, the battles against liberalism, and the pioneers of the new era in terms of the institutions which eventually emerged. As I read this, I came away saying, “I want to know much more.” The book has inspired me to read more widely on the subject overall, particularly Murray’s development of the Missionary Training Institute.

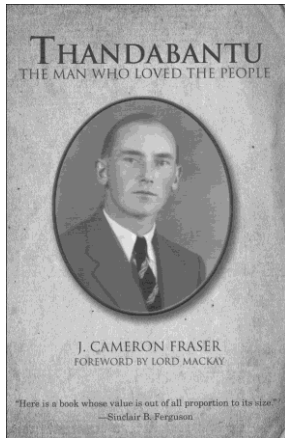
For English readers, *South Africa’s Forgotten Revival* is a good introduction to the revival of 1860-1862 in the Cape. The author is sympathetic to the subject. She introduces us to several key personalities and the spread of the awakening.

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

***Thandabantu: The Man Who Loved the People.* J. Cameron Fraser. Belleville, ON: Guardian Books, 2010, 70 pp., paper. ISBN 155452480-6**

In 1938 a young Scot, James Fraser, travelled to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). There he ministered for Christ for the rest of his short life. He died there when his son, Cameron, was only four and a half years old. In his nineteen years in Africa, he showed the love of Christ so well that the people

among whom he served named him “the man who loved the people”: *Thandabantu*.



James Fraser began as a teacher and teacher trainer; that remained a key part of his work until his death. At the end of World War II, he returned to Scotland for two years; during this time he studied dentistry, was ordained as a minister, and married his childhood sweetheart. When they returned to Rhodesia in 1947, his dentistry and her nursing skills enabled them to add medical care to his ministry of teaching and preaching. He died in Arica twelve years later after a brief but very fruitful ministry. This memoir highlights the working of God’s grace through hearts filled with His love.

*Thandabantu* is Cameron Fraser’s memoir of his father. It is not a biography as such, nor is it a detailed history of the mission. The author has gathered some verbal snapshots to help his own children know the grandfather that he himself barely had time to know as a father. *Thandabantu* is a sketch of James Fraser’s life and the mission. It is a sketch that helps to bring him to life before us and to see God’s grace working in and through him. Because of that and perhaps because the author first wrote it as a series of articles, it may seem a little disjointed. Nevertheless, it is interesting and edifying.

For many, an attractive feature of *Thandabantu* is that it is brief; the text is only forty-eight pages and is sprinkled with pictures. It is a pleasant and easy Sunday afternoon read for all but the slowest readers.

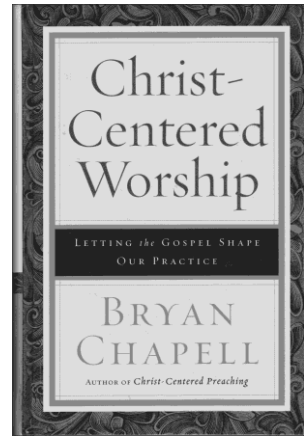
*Reviewed by Donald A. Codling. Rev. Codling recently retired as the minister at Bedford Presbyterian Church, Bedford, Nova Scotia, where he served for over twenty-five years. He continues to serve as the Stated Clerk of the Eastern Canada Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America.*



## Applied Theology

***Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice.* Bryan Chapell. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009, 320 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-8010-3640-8**

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” Therefore, there is no more important subject than considering the worship of God and how it affects the body of Christ as well as those who are still “afar off”. In his book, *Christ-Centered Worship*, Bryan Chapell, president of Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, focuses on public worship and examines the major liturgical practices of the church from Rome to the present that have had influence in North America. Using these liturgies, he argues that it has been and always ought to be that the message of the gospel shapes worship and gives it structure while allowing for great diversity within that structure. Chapell’s goal is to show Christians that their worship patterns unite them with generations before them and different cultures around them because where the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, inevitably worship patterns will be in harmony with other faithful churches.



The first chapter is very helpful as Chapell explains the general structures of historical liturgies both for the liturgy of the Word and for the liturgy of the Upper Room. In this chapter he introduces the five liturgies that form the basis of the comparison for the rest of the book: Rome, Luther, Calvin, Westminster and Rayburn. He organizes, by way of two charts, a comparative analysis of these five liturgies. Having the distinctives of each liturgy available in chart form is extremely helpful and elucidates the text in a remarkable way.

Chapters two to six devote one chapter each to an in-depth analysis of each of the five liturgical styles. The reader is struck more by the similarities than the differences of these liturgies and this, of course, is precisely the thesis that Chapell has set out to prove – the gospel itself shapes worship and therefore the contours have remained relatively untouched throughout the ages. Once again, the charts contained in these chapters provide clarity and

strength to this argument. Where practices occur to which we might take exception, in the Roman liturgy for example, Chapell suggests that these are symptoms of where and how the gospel is misunderstood.

Chapter eight enters into a thorough analysis of Old Testament worship in the temple as Chapell shows that it is not church tradition from the time of the New Testament alone that determines the gospel structures of the liturgy of the church; in Solomon's temple the basic structures of gospel worship are discernable as well. Here we see the same elements of worship present – Adoration, Confession, Assurance, Thanksgiving, Petition, Instruction, Benediction and Praise, Communion and Dismissal. The author makes a very balanced and helpful comment that will hopefully prevent the ossification of what is meant to be free in the Spirit:

I do not mean by outlining Solomon's worship this way to imply that he consciously set out to establish a gospel message by the structure of his worship. Neither do I want to insist that every detail of his worship fits as neatly into this pattern as my categories may suggest. My intention is not to press every detail into this mold, but rather to indicate that there are regular and recognizable features to God's worship because there is continuity in his nature and the way he deals with his people. Not all occasions call for the same details of worship, but worship of God will necessarily echo basic truths about him. In Scripture these truths always have a redemptive context, so it is natural that these truths will assume redemptive features as they are communicated in worship. (p. 105)

Having established that the gospel defines the elements of worship and having shown the remarkable preservation of these elements, Chapell turns in chapter nine to examine the heart of every true service of worship; this he calls "Re-presenting" Christ's story. He suggests that this theme alone will honour the Lord, edify the saints, instruct those "learning the gospel" and speak to the outsider about the glory of God and the sin of mankind. So much of what the author says needs to be reread and deeply absorbed. Here is an example from the closing portion of chapter nine: "Worship should not be so narrowly conceived as being only about reminding people of their ethical obligations and doing proper things to honor God. Worship is about renewing relationship with the present Christ" (p. 124).

Chapter ten provides a very helpful discussion on the modern challenges of worship styles and the ensuing controversies. Once again, the author goes back to the centrality of the gospel and argues that if Christians understand the central elements of worship and the necessity of gathering together to represent the gospel, they will be willing to accept differing styles and traditions while recognizing the continuity of proclaiming Christ. "Not only can gospel priorities aid worship choices, but they can stop worship wars. . . . If gospel priorities do not determine worship choices, then people's preferences

will tear the church apart” (p. 130). Chapter eleven then goes on to expand upon modern tensions and to show that balance, rather than extreme, is not only possible but essential to true worship.

One of Chapell’s subthemes in this book is the idea that worship must contain variety within the structure of the gospel framework. In chapter twelve, Chapell discusses the various components of Christ-centred worship and attempts to show the variety that is possible within these components. For example, he shows how the call to worship can be presented as a scripture that is read, as brief words from the pastor, as a choral introit, as something recited in unison, as a responsive reading, as a song, or as a hymn. He does not mean his ideas to be exhaustive but rather to be a springboard to encourage the creative gifts of other believers.

The second half of the book, chapters thirteen to twenty-four, provides worship resources. A chapter each is devoted to the elements of liturgy that were examined and discussed in the first half of the book: call to worship; affirmation of faith; confession of sin; assurance of pardon; rubrics: transitions; historic components; Scripture-reading history and practice; Christ-centred sermons; benedictions and charges; worship service examples; communion services; and musical styles.

It is surprising that the whole topic of baptism is avoided. Clearly the author made a conscious decision here, perhaps wanting to avoid alienating a large portion of his readership and thus robbing them of the powerful principles contained in this work.

The discussion on transitions was most welcome. How many times have Christians experienced the sense that they are ticking down a “to do” list in worship rather than flowing through worship in response to each element as true worshippers?

This book is immensely helpful in causing the reader to think through the basic principles of worship and to work through his or her own personal biases that may be a hindrance to others. Chapell makes use of Hughes Oliphant Old’s work *Worship That Is Reformed According to Scripture*<sup>1</sup> and actually brings Old’s careful historical work to greater use through very helpful application. There is a very fair and judicious select bibliography at the back of the book that will assist readers in studying this topic at length. Chapell himself is careful and reasoned; his arguments are clearly derived from Scripture and supported by the history of the church. This approach is somewhat of a contrast to John M. Frame’s work *Worship in Spirit and Truth*,<sup>2</sup> where the reader has a sense that Frame’s opinions and preferences carry too much weight.

Bryan Chapell has provided a wonderful treasury of worship principles and aids to the church in North America and indeed around the world. It will certainly be used widely and one suspects it will be used as a textbook in

<sup>1</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship That Is Reformed According to Scripture*, Guides to the Reformed Tradition (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1984).

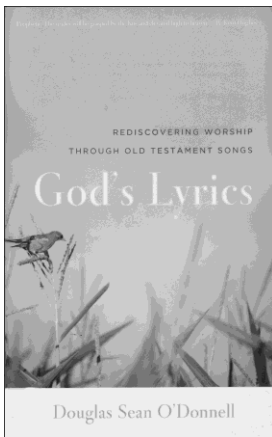
<sup>2</sup> John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1996).

many colleges and seminaries. Philip Rykan, President of Wheaton College, Chicago, Illinois, is quoted on the back cover as saying that this book “seems destined to become one of the best resources available for improving the practice of Christian worship”. It is clearly a sequel to Chapell’s already well known work, *Christ-Centered Preaching*.<sup>3</sup> One hopes that a third book will follow on the subject of Christ-centred pastoral care. By the grace of God, both unity and vitality will be enhanced as readers grasp the strong and practical principles of Chapell’s writing on worship.

*Reviewed by Nancy J. Whytock, Haddington House*



***God’s Lyrics: Rediscovering Worship Through Old Testament Songs.* Douglas Sean O’Donnell. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010, 211 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-59638-172-8**



Since the time of the Reformation, debates related to congregational singing have often centred on exclusive psalmody over and against singing non-inspired, man-made songs. In *God’s Lyrics*, pastor and church planter Douglas O’Donnell laments over the modern church’s failure to not only sing the Psalms but also other lyrics found in the Scriptures. What is most alarming to O’Donnell is that the contemporary church has failed to let the theology and themes of these other scriptural lyrics influence congregational singing. The goal of his work is to call the church first to rediscover these lost songs and second to let the themes and theology of these lost songs challenge and influence the

church’s congregational singing today.

O’Donnell’s work is divided into two parts. The first part surveys five important songs found in the Old Testament. Starting with the two songs of Moses (Ex. 15 and Deut. 32), the reader is sung out of Egypt in chapter one to the doorstep of the Promised Land in chapter two. After arriving in the Promised Land, the song of Deborah (Judg. 5) sings the reader from Sinai to the period of the judges in chapter 3. In chapter four, the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-10) and the song of David (2 Sam. 22) harmonize together to rejoice in the coming of the Lord’s anointed. And finally in chapter five with

<sup>3</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

judgment coming to the unfaithful kingdom, the reader joins with the righteous remnant in the song of Habakkuk (Hab. 3).

O'Donnell sees four recurring motifs running through each of these songs. The first motif is that the Lord is at the centre of each of these songs. He is consistently "addressed, adored, and 'enlarged'" (p. 113). The second motif observed is that in these songs the Lord's "mighty acts in salvation history are recounted" (p. 113). These songs are never ahistorical; they are always connected to the Lord's actions within history. The third motif observed is that God's "acts of judgments are rejoiced in" (p. 113). The Lord's wrath and judgment against sin and wickedness are sources of joy for the Lord's people. The final motif is that the Lord's "ways of living (practical wisdom) are encouraged" (p. 113). These songs call the Lord's people to live righteously.

O'Donnell next uses these four motifs as an interpretive grid to evaluate both classical hymns and contemporary Christian choruses. Rather than choosing a random selection of contemporary choruses, O'Donnell selects the top fifty choruses recorded in the Christian Copyright Licensing International database<sup>1</sup> between 2000 and 2008. For the classical hymns, O'Donnell examines the twenty-five most popular hymns which have lyrics written before 1800 and which are still found in contemporary hymnals. A full list of these top choruses and hymns is provided as an appendix to the book.<sup>2</sup>

Though O'Donnell praises the classical hymns for being Lord-centred and for encouraging the Lord's ways of living, he refuses to allow an "old hymns are good; the new choruses are bad" (p. 138) attitude to permeate his investigation. Surprising to some, O'Donnell does not see the classical hymns consistently praising God for his specific work of salvation history. Often these hymns praise God for his general work in creation, but these praises are offered at ". . . the exclusion of the exodus, the incarnation, the resurrection, and Christ's return" (p. 137). One example of O'Donnell's findings can highlight this point: "In the top twenty-five CH [classic hymns sung in churches today] . . . only two songs . . . mention his resurrection and return" (p. 137).

Furthermore, the classic hymns fail greatly when it comes to rejoicing in the judgment of God. Of the top twenty-five classical hymns, only two mention the word "wrath". What is even more alarming is that many of these hymns originally had verses, which are no longer published or sung, that dealt with the themes of wrath and judgment. O'Donnell concludes that though songs about God's judgment and wrath do exist in classical hymns, "Our generation has chosen, intentionally or unintentionally, not to select

<sup>1</sup> Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) is a business that offers churches a solution to copyright issues. Over 150,000 churches in North America are registered with this organization. The CCLI chronicles the uses of songs used by churches in their worship services. The CCLI database contains over 200,000 worship songs. For more information about the CCLI see [www.ccli.com](http://www.ccli.com).

<sup>2</sup> Some may take exception to the criteria used to define "chorus" versus "hymn".



such hymns for hymnals or congregational singing – or, if they are selected, to modify or remove the offending lyrics” (p. 150).

When it comes to contemporary Christian choruses, O’Donnell has very little praise to offer. They consistently fail to live up to the four motifs found in the Old Testament songs. Though some choruses do appear to be Lord-centred, they often end up emphasizing self over God and His glory. Of the top fifty contemporary choruses, the phrase “my heart” is the most repeated phrase (p. 128). Though O’Donnell attempts to give the writers of these choruses the benefit of the doubt, in the end he concludes these choruses “promote an unnecessary and unscriptural self-focus” (p. 129). The author does acknowledge, “Now, of course, there is nothing wrong with that phrase [my heart]. After all, it occurs fifty-one times in the Psalms . . . Yet, when that phrase is repeated more than phrases like ‘God’s heart,’ ‘Jesus died,’ or even ‘my Jesus’ or ‘my Lord,’ it shows, at the very least, a slightly misplaced emphasis” (p. 128).

Though almost nothing good is said about the contemporary choruses, O’Donnell does find a glimmer of hope. This glimmer comes from one chorus, “In Christ Alone,” a song that sings about the incarnation, death, resurrection and return of Christ.<sup>3</sup> This song also sings of the wrath of God being satisfied with Jesus’ death on the cross. This glimmer is certainly the exception rather than the rule. After examining contemporary Christian choruses, O’Donnell is forced to admit that he finds most of today’s most popular songs to show a theology that is “unchristian at worst and biblically unbalanced at best” (176).

*God’s Lyrics* does not end on such a negative note; it attempts to find ways for the church to move forward. The book surprisingly ends with sheet music consisting of O’Donnell’s personal, contemporary arrangements of the songs of Scripture. Furthermore, the book claims that mp3s of O’Donnell’s arrangements can be downloaded through P&R Publishing’s website. O’Donnell shows with both the sheet music and the downloadable mp3s that he practises what he preaches.

O’Donnell has provided the church with a prophetic call to repent for failing to offer acceptable worship to God (Heb. 12:28). His exegesis and interaction with the Old Testament songs encourages a biblical way forward. Though the exegesis is commendable, if the reader comes to this work looking for an exegetical commentary on each Old Testament song, there will be slight disappointment. However, careful observation of O’Donnell’s footnotes will show the reader that the author has studied diligently and is willing to interact with, critique or defend major commentators.

While many discerning Christians are quick to criticize contemporary Christian choruses, very few are willing to put their traditional hymnal

---

<sup>3</sup> Here is an example of what some might define as a “hymn” rather than a “chorus”. See footnote 16.

through the same criticism. O'Donnell has done just that. He refuses to play favourites and is generous to both contemporary choruses and historic hymns.

O'Donnell's conclusions are far from surprising; many Christians have bemoaned contemporary Christian choruses for the past twenty years. To the discerning Christian, especially those from the Reformed tradition, his conclusions will at times feel obvious. However, what makes O'Donnell's approach unique is that he holds both hymns and choruses up against a standard put forth by the Scriptures. This practice of discerning cultural songs through the lense of the Scriptures is a great service to the church.

This book is ideal for any worship leader or any Christian who is struggling to make the transition out of a chorus-driven tradition. O'Donnell writes with an irenic tone and, because of that, he refrains from unnecessarily offending the reader. For most international readers, this book will prove confusing. O'Donnell's purpose is not to engage global or historic Christianity, but to offer a prophetic call to the contemporary North American church. Though Christians around the world need to be reminded of the importance of singing God's lyrics, most of O'Donnell's illustrations and examples will not connect as strongly with Christians outside of North America. While pastors and theologians are not O'Donnell's target audience and they will often find O'Donnell's conclusions predictable, this book is certainly a worthwhile, quick read for any pastor or elder in North American churches. Moreover, this book would be a worthy read for any Christian struggling to make sense of the verity of worship styles in North American churches.

*Reviewed by Kyle A. Hackmann, an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in America and currently the assistant pastor of Grace Toronto Church. He is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute, Chicago and of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.*



***Learning Evangelism From Jesus.* Jerram Barrs. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009, 283 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-4335-0318-4**

*Learning Evangelism From Jesus* is the second book by Jerram Barrs on evangelism. His previous work, *The Heart of Evangelism*, was also published by Crossway (2005). Barrs is founder and resident scholar of the Francis Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.

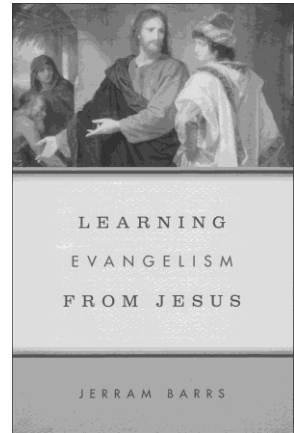
Early in the book you find that Barrs' qualification for writing this book is not purely academic. What shines through is not the mind of an academic but the heart of an evangelist and therefore a calling not confined to the elite but to all of God's people. Nevertheless, this calling must be stirred up through observing and learning from the Lord of the Harvest.

Barrs carefully and rightly discerns basically two different approaches to evangelism. Each approach is applied depending on the state of the individual's heart to which the evangelist is speaking. This is discerned, says Barrs, through prayerful observation and building meaningful relationships with people. We come to learn one of two things about people. The first is that some think themselves unworthy of God's love and beyond the pale of salvation. The other is the one who judges himself worthy of God's love and rewards based on their perceived fulfillment of God's holy law.

For those who seek to be justified by the law, Barrs shows that it is the law itself that Jesus turns to time and again to bring them to the place of helplessness before God. We might be tempted to think this approach is something that is reserved for the unbelieving pagan next door. However, he shows that in the gospel narratives, this is used for the most part for the "churched" professor of the faith. Drawing upon such examples as the rich young ruler (Matt. 19), Nicodemus (Jn. 3) and Simon the Pharisee (Lk. 7), Jesus models for us when and with whom it is appropriate to use the law as a means of undermining the righteous self-confidence of unbelievers in order to drive them to the God of grace. This was something not lost on Paul as he also wielded the law for the same purpose when "re-evangelizing" the Galatians and Romans. Indeed, a significant emphasis throughout this work is how to do evangelism among the "churched".

For those who feel completely and rightly condemned by God, it is the message of God's grace that must lead the charge. Using examples such as the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8), the woman of Samaria (Jn. 4), Zacchaeus (Lk. 19) and others, he shows that the preparatory work of the law is not needed as much since many know themselves already condemned by it. So in the examples cited, Jesus' pure loving grace comes through to make new creatures out of condemned sinners.

The key to a right approach is not just getting alongside, serving and observing others, but also observing ourselves. Barrs devotes several helpful chapters to this. Beginning with his introductory chapter on our Christian calling to evangelize, he further challenges us to self-examination in order that the unbeliever knows it is not out of a sanctimonious spirit but out of a shared struggle that we are presenting the gospel to them. "Once our hearts are in the right place before Jesus, we will begin to think differently about our fellow sinners who, like ourselves, are trapped in sin of one kind or another" (p.159). More profoundly, what the author is at pains to impress upon us is not just the content in Jesus' evangelism but our desire to be conformed to the character and image of Jesus in the process, with the result that there



will be a natural and spontaneous desire for evangelism arising out of the love and grace of God.

Another key component in ministering like Jesus is the ability among the faithful to discern between real evangelism and imperialism. Simply put, you are there to bring people to Jesus and not conform them to your own personally held beliefs about “secondary matters”. “Think of all the laws that exist among believers today regarding music, movies, books, clothing, devotions, church membership requirements, tithing, drinking, smoking and so on” (p.167). Observation of our firmly held personal scruples or cherished traditions is not the end in view but a clear presentation of the gospel.

Another area of concern for Barrs is that, just like Jesus, the local church realize its “finiteness” or limitations in evangelism. This is expressed by the author in a couple of ways. The first is the scope of our evangelism. During the ministry of Jesus, Gentile evangelism was in an embryonic stage. Jesus said that he was sent to minister primarily to “the lost sheep of Israel”. Even He as a human understood that He had limitations. We can feel evangelism to be such an overwhelming task that we end up not doing it. Rather, says Barrs, we must recognize where God has providentially placed us, our families, cities, specializing in smaller circles and then moving out from the centre as we grow (p. 189).

Secondly, in examining Jesus’ dealing with Nicodemus, Barrs shows how limited, indeed helpless, we are before unbelieving hearts, no matter how well educated or religious they may be. We cannot argue or persuade anyone into the kingdom. We are always dependent upon the Spirit’s work. Jesus Himself knew, and told Nicodemus as much, that it was the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in enabling people to see the kingdom of God. People need to know that their problem is so profound that nothing short of the new birth will suffice. Jesus loved people enough to be honest with them about it and at the same time guarded against “easy-believism”. Christians need to be impressed again with the amount of space in that conversation with Nicodemus that Jesus gives solely to the work of the Spirit and our own finiteness.

One of the main ideas coming through in this work is that evangelism involves a commitment of the whole person – heart, mind and body. It is a craft to be worked out through trial and error but never neglected. Because no two people are the same, the evangelist must undertake to study the various ways in which Jesus engages different people. Barrs has shown that the beauty of the gospels is that we have such a broad range of characters and approaches. This book is an excellent place to start in identifying both.

A study guide concludes the book. While Barrs gives many examples from his own life, the study guide allows us to think hard about how we can live these ideas out in our own lives. This makes it suitable for personal or small group studies.

The reader cannot come away from this volume unchallenged and unexamined. It moves us out of our comfort zone but leaves us with a greater de-

sire to do evangelism, and to do it like our Lord. Here is a work to be enthusiastically commended.

*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton*

***Doing Theological Research: An Introductory Guide for Survival in Theological Education.* Robert W. Pazmiño. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009, 94 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-60608-939-2**

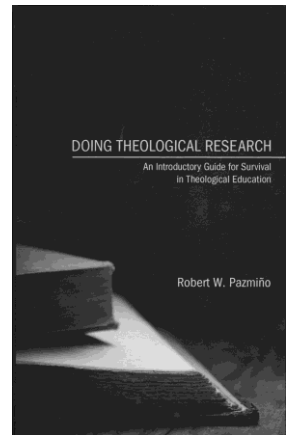
I first began reading Robert Pazmiño's material about thirteen years ago. At that time I read through his highly acclaimed work *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, the second edition, which has now gone into a third edition.<sup>1</sup> I found both that work and *Doing Theological Research* very engaging and useful.

The first fifty pages of *Doing Theological Research* are written by Pazmiño and are divided into seven chapters. These chapters, according to the introduction, are the distillation of Pazmiño's twenty-eight years of "guiding students with their research and study in a variety of settings and from working with theological faculty in a number of schools" (p. ix). He then goes on in his introduction to state his three objectives in writing the book:

- 1) To explore the purposes and basics of theological study and research.
- 2) To reaffirm the importance of theological study and research in a variety of theological disciplines.
- 3) To inspire Christians in relation to the calling to study as a form of worship and spiritual discipline. (p. ix)

Chapter one, "Where to Start", begins with what is theology, what is theological education and why do we pursue the study of theology? He introduces succinctly the issue of calling and commends Edmund P. Clowney's book *Called to the Ministry*.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter two, "The Five Commandments of Theological Research", is Pazmiño's adaptation of Max Stackhouse's formulation. There is great material here to take your students through as they begin writing in their theologi-



<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964).

cal course of studies. This chapter contains some of the best advice I have seen in print.

My other favourites were chapters five and seven: "Writing with Heart and Head" and "Practical Advice". Too often we do not help our students to learn how to write. Perhaps as theological educators we brush this aside because we believe this is the job of someone else. We must take our students as we find them. We are there to serve them and to help. The author's "Practical Advice", chapter seven, contains four pages of the best advice on writing that professors can share with their students, with paragraphs subtitled "Start Early", "Ask for Help", "Share Your Work", "Let Go with Prayer" and "Learn from Feedback".

Pazmiño's unique place as an Hispanic individual writing in the United States and as someone who has been described as an ecumenical, evangelical Reformed theologian is seen in chapter six, "A Spiritual Practice". He is trying to cultivate an attitude in the student-writer – an attitude of spiritual humility, community and holism. There is much to be commended here, yet it was the one chapter of the book which did cause me to wonder about the author's presuppositions and was the only chapter with which I did not find myself in complete accord.

The next portion, almost half of the book, is a series of five appendices, four of which were written by Pazmiño's colleagues at Andover Newton Theological School; the fifth is written by Pazmiño himself. The best of these in my estimation is Appendix A, "A Brief Guide to New Testament Exegesis" (pp. 51-61). This appendix is most helpful and could easily be passed out in class to help students.

A couple of minor points should have been considered prior to publishing this book. First, perhaps the cover of the book should indicate that it was written by Robert Pazmiño "and others". I say this because just a little over half of the book was by Pazmiño himself. Second, a final edit would have caught some missed italicization of book titles.

All professors in theological education should have this book in their libraries. Perhaps colleges could use sections from it during orientation sessions or for a seminar on "conducting theological research".

*Reviewed by Jack C. Whytock*

***Engaging Your Teen's World: Becoming a Culturally Savvy Parent.* Brian Housman. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009, 203 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-58743-254-5**

Culture seems to be beating down the door through communication devices that many parents are slowly familiarizing themselves with. How do parents equip their children to flourish in a godly way without having to create a culture of disengagement from the world around them?

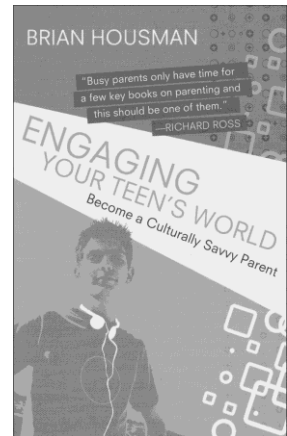
Brian Housman provides some solid answers in his book *Engaging Your Teens World: Become a Culturally Savvy Parent*. Houseman is founding director of Awake to Life, a non-profit ministry to parents and teens.

Houseman cautions against “knee-jerk” reactions to the culture in attempting to shield teens from its darker side. Rather, he sees culture as a positive thing. This is entirely biblical and a message we need to hear again. Notwithstanding the darker side of culture and constant barrage of ungodly influences children are exposed to on a daily basis, Housman wants readers to see that there are attractive aspects to culture. “Instead of running from culture you can run toward it and see the beauty and truth in it. You can lead your teen into seeing the redemption of God happening . . . all throughout culture. If you do, the depths of your conversations with your teen will be beyond your expectations” (p. 40). While not asking parents to go out of their way to engage with the seedier side of culture, the author does suggest that when it presents itself the parent ought to use the opportunity to engage the child and try to work through the reality of culture through the lens of God’s Word.

There are many strengths in this book. It is not just a book about being culturally savvy but child savvy. It is a call to engage the child along with the culture. How often do parents spend time observing the culture around them? Likewise, how often do they give thought to truly getting to know their children?

Housman warns parents not to see their children through “rose-colored glasses”. Not only has culture been an “easy target” over the years but sometimes the wrong target. He shows that parents are often ready to lay the blame of all their woes at the feet of culture, failing to recognize that the reason their children are drawn to these things in the first place is because of a sinful disposition. In his chapter entitled “Finger Pointing”, he shows that parents cannot see culture as a positive thing because they are too busy using it as a scapegoat to shift blame away from their children. He says that to make assumptions like, “My child is too disciplined to get into drugs.” or “My son is too young to get involved with pornography” is neither fair nor safe (p. 53). Parents need to be upfront with their teen about the culture of sin in their own hearts. They need to show, as those made in God’s image, what His original design was for and how we have fallen from that leading us to the choices we make.

He calls parents to carefully observe that children can be radically different from one another and says that there should not be a “one approach fits all” mentality to parenting. Parents have to put some time and thought into finding out where the particular strengths and weakness of each child lie and



nurture them accordingly. He states, “I can’t stress enough the importance of handling a teen’s passion with seriousness” (p. 112). Find out what drives the child. Find out how God has uniquely gifted them and through the Word and the grace of God, fan that passion into a flame for God’s glory. “One of the greatest things you can do is become a student of your kids” (p. 125).

This book does not pretend to be the last word on parenting teens. In fact, Housman is very honest about where he falls short and provides extra resources to supplement what is lacking. He deals honestly with where he himself is as a parent, and one is able to hear someone who is actually learning as he goes. It gives one the feeling of being in conversation.

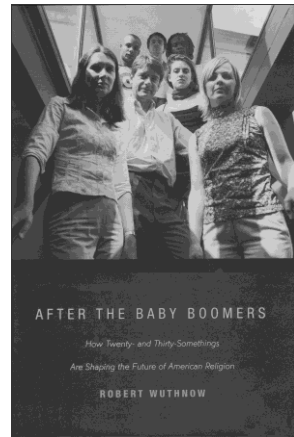
One of the weaknesses I found was the lack of engagement with the gospel’s place in all of this. It is assumed but is not as explicit as it ought to be. For the New Testament writers, the gospel was the chief tool of transforming not only the person or family but the culture as well.

However, as a parent, after reading this book I felt genuinely helped. There are many encouragements here for parents trying to navigate their way through some choppy cultural waters.

*Reviewed by Kent I. Compton*

***After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion.* Robert Wuthnow. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007, 298 pp., hc. ISBN 978-0-691-12765-1**

Much has been written in the past year about the generational shift and exchange currently taking place in North America. Figures show that the baby boomer generation has begun to leave the workforce in droves, and boomers are beginning to enter the retirement stage of their lives. As their goals change from career to retirement, baby boomers are increasingly more concerned with health care and geriatric support services than the present state of the economy. Provocatively, but perhaps aptly, the generation following the baby boomers has been described by some as “Generation Screwed” because of the economic downturn and projections of drained pension funds and overly burdened healthcare systems. It is this same inheriting generation which Robert Wuthnow, sociologist and director of the Center for the Study of Religion, Princeton University, analyzes in his book *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- And Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion*.





Wuthnow begins by pointing out that while there has been a considerable amount of research done on the religious make up and habits of the baby boomer generation, the generation following them is relatively understudied; and religious leaders have little knowledge of the ways in which this generation will soon be shaping and leading the American church. Wuthnow does an excellent job of defining his terms and phrases in the opening chapters of the book. It was also within these opening chapters that I found Wuthnow's analysis to be the most rich and valuable. Two essential concepts introduced here form an integral foundation to the narrative structure of the book; namely, the definition of generation and the idea of a "tinkerer generation". Wuthnow stresses that our concept of generation has changed because of the baby boomers. Before the boomers, a generation was typically defined in terms of a genealogy within a family. The term "Baby Boomer Generation" refers to anyone born between 1946 and 1964. Despite a nearly twenty year span, the people born within this time are considered to be from the same generation due to a common culture and shared experiences; for example, exposure to such formative events as the civil rights movement or the Vietnam War.

The generation after the baby boomers has sometimes been referred to as the "millenials" or generation X. This nomenclature undoubtedly refers to their ongoing search for definition, but unlike their parents there is no evidence to suggest that this generation has been particularly influenced and shaped by any of the historical events in their lifetime. Wuthnow decides to call them a generation of "tinkerers" in an attempt to describe their approach to religion and spirituality. In the same way that a tinkerer puts together a life from whatever resources, skills and tools are available to him, spiritual tinkers rummage through piles of ideas, theology, conversations, books and magazines until they have an idea or set of ideas that suit them. This concept differs from religious pluralism in that tinkerers may disagree with each other about the correct method of tinkering and piecing together instead of accepting all positions as equal.

While Wuthnow is unable to offer a perfect solution to reaching the tinkers, he does believe that the church can offer stability and comfort to a generation that must constantly piece together its spirituality for itself. His book uses copious amounts of statistics and graphs to convey his analysis of this generation, and at some points the statistical analyses becomes excessive and repetitive. Nevertheless, Wuthnow compiles some thorough research that would be valuable not only to those in the ministry but also to laymen seeking to understand and reach the next generation of the church.

*Reviewed by Ian A. Whytock, B.A. University of King's College and currently a graduate student in history at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.*



## Book Briefs

We have added a new section this year called “Book Briefs” to acknowledge new books we have received over the last year for which we have not provided full book reviews. We have organized these into topical categories to help readers become aware of new books in specific areas.

### Missiology

***Globalization and Its Effects on Urban Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.* Ed., Susan S. Baker. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009, 358 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-87808-006-9**

This book is a festschrift in honour of Dr. Manuel (Manny) Ortiz for his work in inner city ministry and his teaching on Urban Mission at Westminster Theological Seminary. Secondly, the book is a “stand-alone textbook developed around issues that are at the forefront of mission dialogue . . .” The four overall sections are globalization, reconciliation, church planting and leadership development.

***Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!* Ed., Robert J. Priest. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008, 627 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-87808-005-2**

This appears to be the most substantial book to date on the phenomenon of modern missions known as “short-term mission” (STM). The book is divided into six sections: Connecting with Long-Term Missions, Encountering Social Others, Forging Global Partnerships, Carrying Out Specialized Ministries, Considering Legal and Liability Issues in Short-Term Missions, and Evaluating and Improving the Impact of STM on Participants. There are an impressive twenty-five contributors.

The book adopts an approach “which is positive and constructive. While there are criticisms in the book, these criticisms are not directed against STM per se, but against particular ways of doing STM. That is, the goal of this book is to improve the ways in which STM is carried out and to improve the understandings needed on the part of all who are involved in short-term missions” (p. viii). A must-have book.

***Missions from the Majority World: Progress, Challenges, and Case Studies.* Eds., Enoch Wan and Michael Pocock. Evangelical Missiological Society Series no. 17. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library 2009, 411 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-87808-019-9**

A work which begins by defining the concept “majority world” and related terms will certainly help in the classroom in many Bible colleges and seminaries and bring added clarity of thought. This book’s thesis is clear – Christianity has shifted from the West to the South and East, and now we must be ready to learn from the missionary experiences of those from the majority world. Part one, Global Overview, helps with definition and context; parts two, three and four all deal with regional issues – Asia, Africa and Latin America; part five is Issues of Concern; and part six is particular Case Studies. The book speaks of the reality today – Western missionary forces are shrinking and missions from the majority world are seeing substantial growth.

***Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership.* Sherwood G. Lingenfelter. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008, 175 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-3605-7**

This is the third book in a series dealing with culture and cross-cultural ministry. It addresses a reality which is only going to enlarge in the years to come – our ministry will increasingly be in multicultural teams and contexts. *Leading Cross-Culturally* deals with cultural diversity and the damaging tendency of forming ministry partnerships in “the way that cultural biases of every kind create obstacles to effective leadership and ministry partnerships”. The matter of control and power is a key issue as it seems this is pervasive in all cultural expressions of leadership.

The goals of the book are clear: to help leaders understand their personal culture of leadership; “to equip the leader to become an effective learner in another cultural context”; to reflect on the human desire to seek power and control; and to define the “pathways for biblically based, Christ-centered, power-giving leadership in single-culture and multicultural contexts”. Destined to be a book that will be very useful in many places for current leaders as well as for leadership training.

***Mission in an African Way: A practical introduction to African instituted churches and their sense of mission.* Thomas Oduro, Hennie Pretorius, Stan Nussbaum and Bryan Born. Wellington, South Africa: Bible Media, 2008, 228 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-86804-233-3**

Anyone preparing to do mission work in Africa must read this book or something similar. Why? Because it addresses a subject which we almost universally do not address, namely the large AIC movement on the African continent. AIC stands for African Instituted Churches or African Initiated Churches or African Independent Churches – all three names are common and interchangeable. It is that large grouping of churches started by Africans and not by missionaries. They cannot be ignored, and *Mission in an African Way* helps fill a gap to start to tell us about the AICs and mission. This is very much a “manual” style book for people in the “mainline” churches to understand the AICs. The book aims at bridge-building, description, gentle evaluation, Bible study and accessibility of style.

***The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions.* Paul G. Hiebert. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009, 217 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-8010-3681-1**

For evangelicals, the name Paul Hiebert is virtually synonymous with the words “mission” and “anthropology”. We have relied upon his books for textbooks for decades; with his death in 2007, many of us thought there would be no more new Hiebert books. However, two have appeared posthumously, this being one of those. *The Gospel in Human Contexts* was written by Hiebert but edited under his daughter Eloise’s care and oversight. It is a summary book on anthropology and mission with a view particularly to help us master the skill of doing human exegesis – that is, to learn “to study the social, cultural, psychological, and ecological systems in which humans live in order to communicate the gospel in ways the people we serve understand and believe”. The goal is always to see the gospel bring transformation in a culture, not captivity. Destined to become a standard in the field and shows Hiebert as the mature thinker he was.

## Christian Piety and Spirituality

***The Seven Deadly Sins and How to Overcome Them.* Graham Tomlin. Oxford: Lion, 2007, 187 pp., paper. ISBN UK 978-0-7459-5221-5; ISBN US 978-0-8254-6258-0**

Though this book's title begins with a certain medieval allusion, "the seven deadly sins", it is anything but medieval. (Gregory the Great arrived at the number seven, we believe.) Tomlin opens this book with a stimulating chapter on "Sins and the Soul" and then proceeds to give a chapter each to pride, envy, anger, gluttony, lust, greed and sloth. These are appropriately illustrated to engage the reader, appropriately referenced to various writers, and appropriately mingled with Scripture. The result is a helpful spiritual book to encourage us toward greater depth and to point us to a better way. There are some connections here thematically to Dallas Willard's writing.

## Christian Worldview

***Marginalising Christians: Instances of Christians being sidelined in modern Britain.* Newcastle upon Tyne: The Christian Institute, 2009, 80 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-90108-646-1**

The byline of The Christian Institute is "Christian Influence in a Secular World". This book, *Marginalising Christians*, is a reality check upon the state of things in Britain today as concerns increasing marginalization of Christians, growing discrimination, the risk of the loss of religious freedoms and speech, and the intolerance Christians are facing in a nation of "equality and diversity". The book is very well documented with instances of what is happening in education, the media, the police, employment, local councils, public funding, goods and services, and violence and crime as relates to Christianity. The last sentences in the conclusion say it all: "When it comes to applying equality and diversity laws, Christians seem to be the first to be punished and the last to be protected. This prejudice and intolerance must end."

***Art to the Glory of God.* John Barber. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010, 33 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-60899-310-9**

The author is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America and a cultural historian and theologian. He has also authored *The Road from Eden: Studies in Christianity and Culture*. This new booklet follows on the author's

book and attempts to answer the question, “How can a Christian create a work of art that truly glorifies God?” Thus, the stress is on criteria for art of worth. Obviously “chapters” are very brief in such a booklet with some being one page, for example, “What the Artist Is Not”.

I found many quotable quotes in this small booklet, such as, “Great art is that which embodies great content.” A helpful little primer on the subject which would serve well as a brief read in a full-orbed worldview course.

***Secret Faith in the Public Square: An Argument for the Concealment of Christian Identity.* Jonathan Malesic. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009, 248 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-58743-226-2**

This book is aimed very much at an American context. The introduction’s title is “Secrecy and Christian Faith in Contemporary America”, and part two is entitled “Concealment of Christian Identity in Contemporary America”, with three chapters. Clearly American Christians will be the chief audience, and this is certainly in order for a book’s market. Malesic’s thesis runs very counter to much of our popular notions of making one’s faith public. Rather he calls for a purposed concealment of faith in the public sphere. The author is taking Matthew 6:1, 6 and applying it in a way in which piety is kept secret and avoids falling into public hypocrisy through self-interest, etc. Part one, which is less exclusively American, explores “Concealment of Christian Identity in the Theological Tradition” and consists of six chapters. Here we encounter Cyril of Jerusalem, Kiekegaard and Bonhoeffer. The book will certainly allow for heated discussion in a worldview course and spark much original debate. It could be used as a senior-level reading outside America.

## Church History

***The Dynamics of Christian Mission: History through a Missiological Perspective.* Paul E. Pierson. Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2009, 364 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-86585-006-4**

In some ways this book is hard to classify – is it church history or missiology? I think in the end one must say it is a text for the history of missions. The title well describes the book’s thrust and tone – “The dynamics” – apt for describing the expansion of Christianity as a movement. It does not claim to be comprehensive as a history but certainly engages with a broad range of historical subjects in its thirty-five chapters. The author is hoping to develop the reader’s ability to see renewal as the seedbed for mission movements and to ask missiological questions of church history. Pierson taught the course for

twenty-five years, which is the basis for this book. The book could be considered a helpful resource next to the somewhat dated book by J. Herbert Kanes, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission*.

***Reaching Forward: From a Rich Heritage to a Certain Goal, The Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1859-2009.* Allan and Mairi Harman. Melbourne, AU: Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 2009, 76 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-64650-971-6**

This is a regional Australian church history of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria upon the occasion of its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is written at a general level – free of endnotes/footnotes and bibliography yet certainly has all the marks of fine research by the authors. Though it chronicles one denomination in one Australian state, there are factors here to which Christians around the world will be able to relate – church union and continuing church movements, women in ministry, training for the ministry, changing methods of evangelism and the changing face of demographics in society. Though all these are certainly illustrated in the life of the church in Victoria, they connect to the wider church. A helpful read to understand who the Presbyterian Church of Victoria is and has been.

***Ann Bradstreet: Pilgrim and Poet.* Faith Cook. Darlington, UK: EP Books, 2010, 176 pp., paper. ISBN 978-0-85234-714-0**

Faith Cook's *Anne Bradstreet: Pilgrim and Poet* is a fascinating and inspiring read from several perspectives. From the historical perspective, how enlightening to follow the course of history in seventeenth century colonial America through the eyes of the daughter of one of the founding leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Insights into that turbulent period of British history are equally revealing. As a study of the first American poet, and that a woman in a decidedly male-dominated age, there is much to learn and appreciate. Cook has liberally sprinkled passages of Anne Bradstreet's work throughout the pages. And for spiritual edification, come sit at the feet of this beautiful soul as, faced with loneliness, pain, sickness, fear, childbirth, loss of loved ones and property, and personal struggles, she turns to her God and pours out her heart in supplication and faith through her poetry. One is often reminded of the psalms of David. Highly recommended for all ages, but particularly fit for family reading or girls in their teens.