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A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership
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Many people think that a "spiritual Christian" is mystical, dreamy, impractical, and distant. When he prays, he shifts his voice into a sepulchral tone in tremolo. This kind of unctuous piety is a poor example of true spirituality. To be "spiritually minded" simply means to look at earth from heaven's point of view. The spiritually minded believer makes his decisions on the basis of eternal values and not the passing fads of society.

WARREN W. WIERSBE

When a little child becomes conscious of being a little child, the childlikeness is gone; and when a saint becomes conscious of being a saint, something has gone wrong.

OSWALD CHAMBERS

BOOK NOTICES

John H. Armstrong

IN HIS IMAGE: REFLECTING CHRIST IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Michael J. Wilkins

Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress (1997)

223 pages, paper, \$14.00

What does it really mean to follow Jesus as a faithful disciple? Is discipleship only for "the few" or is it for every *true* Christian? The book is divided into three parts: (1) Is It Really Possible to Become Like Jesus? (2) What Does it Take to Become Like Jesus? (3) Toward a New Vision of Discipleship and Spirituality. People who have followed Christ down through the ages have never consistently appealed to the divine nature of Jesus as "God-in-the-flesh" as an excuse from active obedience to Jesus' commands. Wilkins agrees with the historic church and believes that spiritual transformation into the likeness of Jesus is not only possible but necessary.

Wilkins, dean of faculty and professor of New Testament literature at Talbot Theological Seminary, did his doctoral work on the meaning of the term "disciple" (*matheteis*) in the Gospel of Mathew. He later wrote a work for pastors and students titled: *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Zondervan, 1992). This new work is built upon this earlier research and is aimed more intentionally at the average Christian reader. It is clear, well

argued, and extremely helpful. This work is included in a series of titles by NavPress called "The Spiritual Formation Line." The company is to be commended for establishing this line and for publishing this particular work.

SACRED PATHWAYS

Gary Thomas

Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2000)

232 pages, cloth, \$16.99

Gary Thomas, the founder and director of the Center for Evangelical Spirituality in Bellingham, Washington, seeks to integrate Scripture, church history and the Christian classics to foster spiritual formation and holy living. In this new book he engagingly attempts to strip away the idea that "one-size-fits-all spirituality" is for every Christian. The author develops nine distinct spiritual temperaments, looking at their traits, strengths, and pitfalls. Though there is enough here for everyone to find something to disagree with, I believe this is a remarkably useful book for a time when the Christian marketplace is flooded with books on spirituality, many of which are not *distinctly* Christian. Thomas is a good and thoughtful guide.

Here is one example of the kind of thought the reader encounters:

Instead of learning from others, Christians have often chosen to segregate themselves by starting a new church whenever the worship preferences diverge. This segregation has erected denominational walls and impoverished many Christians. Unless you happen to be born into just the right tradition, you're brought up to feed on somebody else's diet. Unfortunately, some Christians have a tendency to question the legitimacy of any experience that may not particularly

interest them. Instead of saying, "That's not for me," they proclaim, "That shouldn't be for anybody" (20).

This is typical of the insightful comments found in *Sacred Pathways*.

SERVE THE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH: CHRISTIANS AS LEADERS AND MINISTERS

Andrew W. Clarke

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2000)

305 pages, paper, \$30.00

How did the early church, in the mid-first-century world of Roman and Greek culture, express its faith? Did the church *integrate* into the society or stand as a *distinct minority* within the larger world of the time? Scholars have rightly debated this issue for some time. Andrew Clarke's work is a major step forward in the discussion. He seeks to answer the question: How did these early Christians perceive the nature and practice of leadership? He writes:

Early Christianity was an urban phenomenon, and the models of leadership and structures of organization which were most accessible to them were those of the Graeco-Roman cities, the Roman colonies, the ubiquitous smaller guilds and associations of which some Christians would have been members, the family and household networks within which both citizens and non-citizens lived, and the Jewish synagogues by then established throughout Palestine and the diaspora (3).

He draws from these ancient sources and compares the theories and practices of leadership in first-century society

with those of the Christian communities founded in the same period, especially those established by the apostle Paul.

The point Clarke articulately establishes is this: Paul's communities developed leadership styles that were expressly in contrast with much of the pattern of his time. For leaders of the church in our own time Clarke's book is unusually wise and extremely helpful. I highly recommend it to those who are interested in reforming the church in terms of the present rush to the CEO model of leadership. Eerdmans, a publisher of serious academic books for thoughtful leaders, has several on-going series that are helpful. This particular volume is a new edition to the six-volume series: "First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World."

WHICH WAY TO GOD?

Peter Jeffery

Darlington, England: Evangelical Press (2000)

Available in the U.S. from P & R Publishers, P. O. Box 817,

Phillipsburg, New Jersey

29 pages, paper, \$1.95

This little book, clearly intended to be given away as an evangelistic tract, is both graphically and theologically appealing. Jeffery always writes with simplicity and care. This work is no exception. He answers four basic questions: Who is God? What is man? What is sin? Who is Jesus Christ? He presents faith and repentance well, and the pictures and designs are well laid out. Highly recommended as a resource to use along with John Blanchard's better known booklet, *Ultimate Questions*.

THE POST CHRISTIAN MIND: EXPOSING ITS DESTRUCTIVE AGENDA

Harry Blamires

Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications (1999)

209 pages, paper, \$10.99

Harry Blamires believes that "The sea of faith is being contaminated by the great oil slick of media innuendo, insult and misrepresentation. A vast campaign is needed to clean up the mess" (cover quote). A typical Blamires insight goes like this: ". . . The distinction between the Christian mind and the post-Christian mind is analogous to the distinction between civilization and the jungle, between order and anarchy" (11). He demonstrates, in his newest work on worldviews and the mind, how the media trashes Christian principles in every area of life—human rights, marriage, family, morality, health, economy, environment, and politics.

Blamires is a respected English author and thinker whose most famous works are *The Christian Mind* and *The Tyranny of Time*. This work should be put alongside his older ones as required reading for pastors and serious lay leaders who are equally influenced by the culture and who influence the lives of members in their local churches. This book would make a great tool for group study among thoughtful Christians. J. I. Packer, in the foreword, calls this work "shrewd reporting of what people around us think and do, with interactive comment offered on a basis of common humanity, common sense and Christian insight" (8).

BRIGHT DAYS, DARK NIGHTS

Elizabeth Ruth Skoglund
 Grand Rapids: Baker (2000)
 222 pages, paper, \$13.99

I first read the work of author and therapist Elizabeth Skoglund over twenty years ago. At the time I thought, "Here is a wise Christian counselor who understands how to use the best of psychology combined with a high view of Scripture and a studied view of how we actually live in the world." My view of her ability has risen with this book.

In *Bright Days, Dark Nights* she draws from the sermons and conversations of Charles H. Spurgeon to look at subjects such as depression, confidence, loneliness, change, and anxiety. She demonstrates what every biographer of the great Spurgeon has shown—he battled continually with depression and related dark periods. Spurgeon struggled, Skoglund clearly shows, with an acceptance based on physical, emotional, and spiritual causes and cures. Every Christian can profit immensely from this important book, especially pastors who struggle mightily with depression and anxiety!

THE STARTING POINT OF CALVIN'S THEOLOGY

George H. Tavard
 Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2000)
 199 pages, paper, \$20.00

George H. Tavard is an unusual, and influential, Roman Catholic scholar. He never fails to surprise the serious reader. In this new book he demonstrates what he believes is the "starting point" for serious interaction with the thought of the reformer, John Calvin. He turns to the little-known *Psychopannychia*, the first writing Calvin did as a

theologian in 1534. The work was directed against the teaching of "heretics" like some Anabaptists who held the notion of "soul sleep." Calvin asserted the doctrine of immortality as the traditional Christian position and, according to Tavard, this early work of polemics shaped his approach to theology for the remainder of his life.

Tavard relates this early work of Calvin to his later writings and shows that Calvin's Christian humanism must be defined against a Renaissance background. The important point he establishes, beyond reasonable doubt, is that Calvin parted from Christian humanism by grounding his arguments exclusively in the Scripture and the early church fathers. What relationship exists between Calvin's earliest work and his classic *Institutes of the Christian Religion*? Tavard answers this question in a way that should foster further academic discussion and profitable theological debate. This work will show the "catholic" scope and purpose of Calvin's theological work. Contemporary discussions of ecumenism would profit by this solid work. It is filled with helpful contributions for thoughtful evangelicals.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO IDEAS

William Raeper and Linda Edwards
 Grand Rapids: Zondervan (1997)
 394 pages, paper, \$19.99

Postmodernism, Platonism, Humanism, Existentialism, Rationalism and Fundamentalism—where do you turn for accurate, helpful, succinct, and readable interaction and explanations? How do you teach leaders in the church to understand philosophy so that they can serve the church more effectively? Raeper and Edwards offer the best answer I have found.

Here you can consider the thought of Aristotle, August-

tine, Luther, Calvin, Descartes, Kant, Locke, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Wittgenstein, to name only a few. You will develop a working knowledge of these seminal thinkers and how their ideas shaped movements and institutions, including the church. Linda Edwards is a visiting lecturer at Trinity College, Carmarthen, Wales, and a freelance writer. The late William Raeper, who was known for his important work on George MacDonald, was a writer and teacher who lived in Oxford.

AT THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Larry W. Hurtado
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1999)
138 pages, paper, \$16.00

Hurtado, professor of New Testament at the University of Edinburgh, who taught previously at Regent College, surveys the earliest Christian worship in the context of the Roman world of the first century. Four chapters make up this small book. The first three look at the religious environment in which early Christian devotion developed, the particular features of early Christian worship, and the shape that worship took as it developed. Chapter 3 has the intriguing title: "The Binitarian Shape of Early Christian Worship." By this Hurtado means that Christian worship, from its earliest recorded history saw "the inclusion of Christ with God (the 'Father') as recipient of the worship" (63). The further fruition of worshiping all three persons of the Trinity came as a result of this radically new "binitarian" approach.

The final chapter challenges modern worship leaders. "But, sadly, a great deal of Christian worship is in fact not properly informed by the Bible and Christian theological and liturgical tradition, including the worship of some who think of themselves as very traditional and orthodox"

(110)! Can worship today draw on the rich traditions of the earliest Christian worship? Hurtado believes it can and makes some helpful suggestions about how to go about it.

THE J. I. PACKER COLLECTION

Selected and Introduced by Alister McGrath
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity (2000)
287 pages, paper, \$16.99

J. I. Packer is arguably the most important conservative theologian of the last fifty years. Whether it is an academic essay, a single sermon, a series of popular works, or just an article or editorial, Jim Packer always stimulates both the mind and heart. His foundation in the Puritan idea of Word and Spirit, light and heat, impacts everything he writes.

This little book provides the best one-volume introduction to Packer's thought available. It is a popular introduction to evangelical theology in general and Reformed theology in particular. There are sixteen essays here, ranging from 1954 to 1998, with a six-page introduction to Packer's thought by Alister McGrath. Read Packer whole but if you want to get an overview, and you need a tool for getting folks into his large corpus of written work, use this excellent new volume.

TRUTH DECAY: DEFENDING CHRISTIANITY AGAINST THE CHALLENGES OF POSTMODERNISM

Douglas Groothuis
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity (2000)
303 pages, paper, \$12.99

Douglas Groothuis (pronounced Groo-teis), has again done a great service for the church. He has previously

demonstrated that he is a serious writer who can address the dangers of modern thought without simplistic analyses and ineffective solutions. In this new work on postmodernism he again strikes the heart of important issues cogently.

Groothuis argues that the idea of objective and absolute truth has undergone almost complete loss in recent years. What are we to do, as followers of the way, the truth and the life? Groothuis sees the basic arguments of postmodernity as flawed beyond repair. He believes that there are some truthful insights to be gained from postmodernity but finds the philosophy to be so intellectually flawed as to be beyond serious use by Christians. Even if you disagree with Groothuis, which I do at several points, you will share his major concerns and direction if you are committed to Christ. How do you defend the Gospel, properly, in this present age? This is a timely and needed work that I highly recommend. Pastors should put this book on top of their present reading list.