



## Book Reviews

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**Campbell, H. A., & Garner, S. (2016). *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.**

Reviewed by Audrey Lim

“The kingdom of God is like a Smartphone with endless battery life and unlimited data” (p. 13). Would Jesus have described the kingdom of God by beginning his parable this way? *Networked Theology* explores the relationship between new media and Christian beliefs and practices, with a focus on how theology is to be reflected in an active engagement of our current digital culture. Campbell and Garner not only have backgrounds in both fields but also are expert scholars in media studies and theology respectively. Key findings from their own work as well as scholarly research and case studies are drawn upon to craft a concept of networked theology for the 21st century.

After laying the foundations of technology theology (pp. 19-37) and new media theory (pp. 39-59), Campbell and Garner set out to identify five key traits of how people have practiced and are practicing religion online:

- Networked community – people live simultaneously in multiple personalised loose religious social networks with varying levels of affiliation and commitment.
- Storied identity – people construct their religious identities through shared narratives of faith.
- Convergent practice – people blend religious rituals from multiple sources in ways that create individualised and self-directed spiritual environments.
- Shifting authority – people negotiate the change in factors for what constitutes legitimate religious authorities.
- Multisite reality – people integrate their online and offline attitudes, behaviours and practices.

Campbell and Garner argue that these traits have direct implications for Christianity and therefore must be addressed. The idea of loving our neighbour in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk.10:25-37) gets reassessed by asking who is our neighbour, where is our neighbour and how should we treat our neighbour in the digital culture. In response, Micah’s call to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly (Mic. 6:8) is taken as a framework for answering this. The authors present a four-layer strategy to

enable Christians to develop an informed theological reflection on their use of new media:

- History – uncovering their background and tradition.
- Core beliefs – identifying their core values, priorities and patterns.
- Media negotiation – analysing the positive and negative aspects of new media in light of their history and core beliefs.
- Community discourse about technology – creating statements, guidelines and policies to articulate their approach to new media.

The end goal is to establish online as well as offline “communities of shalom that reflect true neighbourliness through the recognition of others as persons and through integrity in all our relationships” (p. 147).

I found this book thought-provoking, captivating and convincing. Its reflection on theology and digital culture is indeed essential in the 21st century, and will benefit every Christian who uses new media. Its four-layer strategy can especially be applied by those involved in evaluating the impact of their churches’ online ministries. Overall it has a good balance of both the theoretical as well as the practical. Unfortunately, a disappointment for me is the chapter addressing new media theory. With a background in electrical and electronic engineering, I found its discussions rather brief and lack some substantial theoretical grounding. The chapter could be enhanced by drawing on broader scholarly sources. Nonetheless the authors have covered a lot of its basics in just a few pages, which is no easy feat.

So, is establishing online communities of shalom really an achievable goal? Be it yes or no, the one sure thing is that we can each do what we are able to do. And I would recommend this book to anyone who earnestly desires to play his or her part in the community.

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**Cettolin, A. U. (2016). *Spirit, Freedom and Power: Changes in Pentecostal Spirituality*. OR: Wipf & Stock.**

Reviewed by Tania Harris

The growth of Pentecostalism is one of the most extraordinary phenomena in history (p. 34), notes Cettolin in his new book: *Spirit, Freedom and Power*, but it is also a movement that is changing. As an experienced Pentecostal pastor within the Australian Christian Churches (ACC/formerly Assemblies of God (AoG)), the largest Pentecostal denomination in Australia, Cettolin has observed the changes firsthand and sought to explore them in his 2005 doctoral study, ‘A Comparative Study of the Phenomenon of Historic Pentecostal Spirituality and its Contemporary Developments within the Assemblies of God in Australia.’

While growing as a movement, there were indications that Australian Pentecostal spirituality was shifting from its classical roots in both belief and practise. Having identified local church pastors as a key to the shifts, Cettolin addresses the question of whether institutionalisation is driving the change. In *Spirit, Freedom and Power*, he presents the findings of his study in a readable and thoughtful way. Pastors and leaders, Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal alike, along with students of renewal movements will find his work both relevant and insightful.

One of the key strengths of Cettolin’s study is his strong grounding in the Western

Pentecostal movement's historical and theological settings. He begins at first by outlining a helpful working definition for 'spirituality'; one that includes both biblical and secular understandings. From there, an overview of Western Pentecostal history is provided showing the complexity and diversity of the movement. The distinctiveness of Pentecostal spirituality is then surveyed through the eyes of numerous contemporary scholars. African American features, the place of experience in liturgies and rituals, supernatural emphases, implicit values, glossolalia, and a passion for the kingdom are all highlighted.

In describing Pentecostal spirituality, Cettolin follows the lead of current literature which focuses more on empirical observations than theological distinctives to define the movement. While in the past, the doctrine of Spirit Baptism (as a distinct experience subsequent to conversion with tongues-speaking as its evidence) has typically defined Pentecostalism, contemporary expressions are more likely to be denoted by their experiential nature and an emphasis on the fullness of life in the Spirit.

Cettolin then moves his analysis to the Australian context. By way of introduction, Cettolin notes some of the trends observable in contemporary Pentecostal Spirituality and the various explanations for them by Australian scholars. A growing professionalism in leadership structure and style, the maintenance of autonomy in local churches, development of new networks, worship style and an increase in social and political involvement are all identified. But at the heart of Cettolin's research is the question of whether AoG pastors have shifted from a focus on the classical doctrinal position for Spirit baptism and glossolalia to a more general experience of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of the spiritual gifts (p. 67).

Findings from his survey of Australian Pentecostal pastors would indicate the answer to this question to be 'yes'. Australian Pentecostal spirituality has unequivocally shifted from its classical roots. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data indicates significant changes in private devotional practices, church services and practices, community service and outreach as well as in pneumatological beliefs. There is a "move away from an individual crisis experience and from classical expressions of spirituality to those which are more corporate and controlled" (p. 111). Cettolin's quantitative research has been methodically gathered and collated with a sound representative sample to base his findings on. While the nature of the qualitative data and criteria by which interviewees were selected is a little more obscure, the combination of qualitative and quantitative study provides a strong picture.

While it is clear that Pentecostal spirituality is changing for Australian AoG pastors and churches, the reasons for the change are not so clear (p. 71). In his book, Cettolin explores Weber's theory of growing institutionalisation as the key factor. Here Cettolin's thought shines as he draws on the work of sociologists and theologians to explore the interaction between charisma and institutionalisation. Margaret Poloma's groundbreaking research in the American AG is compared against the Australian scene and forms a sound basis by which to frame the discussion. In this discussion Cettolin notes that the presence of tension between the opposing poles of charisma and institutional organisation is one that in itself indicates health and life.

Cettolin's conclusions are both insightful and practical. He insists that we must "go beyond a simplistic dichotomy of charisma versus institution, order versus freedom or Spirit versus structure" (p. 89). Institutionalisation is a natural process, neither inherently right nor wrong, but an inevitable outcome of growth and organisation. So

while it is acknowledged that the ACC movement has shifted from its roots, this is not “necessarily a sign of calcification” but of “flexibility and innovation” (p. iii). Indeed, as a movement who values the leading of the Spirit, change is welcomed as the movement seeks to facilitate new growth and adapts to cultural forces. In this however, there is still a call to action for the local church pastor who has an essential role in maintaining and facilitating the experience of the Holy Spirit in all his members (p. 111).

Cettolin’s work hints at additional reasons for the changes. The influences of the Charismatic and Third Wave movements are briefly mentioned (p. 46), but it may have also been useful to touch on the desire of Pentecostals to be accepted into mainstream orthodoxy (the so-called 'evangelicalization' of Pentecostals).

As Cettolin himself states, his research has elicited lessons that are instructive for Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical and other renewal movements, particularly in the Western world (p. 105). Perhaps the most helpful contribution Cettolin has made is in the provision of a framework of thinking for all organisations and movements who are seeking to maintain the spontaneity of Holy Spirit experience while forming institutional structures that facilitate growth. For AoG/ACC leaders, Cettolin’s study finds its value in helping to understand the big picture of history so that the future can best be led. For academics who are interested in chartering the waves of change in spiritual movements, Cettolin’s work will be illuminating. Theologians will find the study helpful in offering an alternate perspective on the current debates around Spirit Baptism and initial evidence. But perhaps the greatest contribution will be to local church pastors who are seeking to connect to their populations while riding the tension of charismatic experience and organizational needs (p. 111).

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**Cherry, N. (2015). *Energising Leadership*. South Melbourne, VIC: Oxford University Press.**

Reviewed by Andrew Groza

With such a proliferation of books on leadership flooding both secular and Christian markets, is there anything novel to be said? Nita Cherry's book *Energising Leadership* examines an area that is rarely addressed in the extant leadership literature. Cherry understands leadership through the lens of engaging with people's energy in a professional way; she states that “[c]onstructively influencing human energy is the raison d’être for leadership” (p. 23). Viewing leadership through this lens broadens the perspective of a leader's work and lifts the bar for leaders because it requires them to pay attention to things that often go unnoticed. This view highlights that the work of leadership is often more complicated than is given credit. According to Cherry, this is because the energy of people can be affected by many factors (such as environments created by the mission, processes, technologies, rules, relationships, cultures, and spaces in which people work). She also argues that this presents leaders with great opportunities.

Built on that premise, the book unfolds to describe in detail the “energy story” and the need for professional practice. Though this is neither a theological treatise on leadership, nor written from a Christian perspective, there is much in here that speaks directly to the hard, day-to-day work of ministry. Her belief that the “... underlying purpose of leadership is to mobilise enough collective human energy - and for long

enough - to achieve the things we aspire to put right" (p. 4), is something that many a pastor can both agree with, and empathise with the difficulty of achieving.

Not all chapters will be equally beneficial for ministers, but there is much to recommend in the book. Specifically, chapters four through seven are, particularly noteworthy for those engaged in active leadership and ministry. Cherry's insights in chapter four regarding the contribution of leaders to the energy cycle of people and organisations is memorable. Being a professional leader is about "... consciously choosing to mobilise, focus, sustain, and refresh the energy and effort of other people" (p. 83). Each of those tasks (mobilise, focus, sustain, refresh), require different approaches, and she offers direction as to how to discern which state individuals, teams, and organisations are in, so that can be addressed. Furthermore, she highlights the fact that oftentimes energy is blocked, wasted, diverted or sapped by various factors within the environment, and alerts leaders to the fact that "... over time, processes and systems are invented and cultures develop that tie up energy in unproductive ways, or simply become a drain on the enthusiasm and optimism of many people" (p. 84). This invites leaders to take a fresh perspective towards their organisations, not just exclusively focusing on people, but also more broadly, on the environment in which they lead. Doing so, will enable leaders to address practices or systems that often go unnoticed but divert or sap the energies of others, and thereby invest that energy into more productive arenas.

Chapter five looks at real-time leadership, which is about engaging energies face-to-face. Cherry encourages leaders to be present in the moment, attentive to what is going on around them as well as inside them, and to make adjustments as necessary. This practice (being attentive to the energy levels of others, as well as themselves) helps leaders to gain a greater insight into themselves. If they adjust accordingly, the natural by-product is a more effective engagement with other people's energies. Chapter six examines influencing energies from a distance, around the clock - that is, being strategic in the creation of systems and structures that allow human energies to flourish. It is easy to forget that leaders affect the available energy of individuals, teams, and organisations even from a distance. The task here is for leaders to "... exert influence that will continue to operate effectively over time and space without them, and which doesn't depend on their personal presence" (p. 149). In a world that creates increasing opportunities for team engagement across multiple time zones and locations, it is all the more crucial for effective organisations to create systems and processes that encourage the mobilisation of energy, rather than inhibit it.

Perhaps chapter seven is one that is most pressing for ministers, as it explores something ministers would be all too familiar with, the concept of dilemmas. Cherry defines dilemmas as "... situations where difficult choices must be made that seriously disaffect or disadvantage some people in ways that won't go away" (p. 171). Cherry does not shy away from the difficulties attached to leading others, and confronts the fact that many leaders are tempted to ignore or not engage with the complex dilemmas they face. Delaying engagement with a dilemma creates its own challenges, since leaders fail to develop the capability to engage, and the problem becomes even more challenging. Cherry is honest in her appraisal of the difficulties faced by leaders seeking to engage with dilemmas. She points out a number of such difficulties: that an individual cannot see the entire system and therefore cannot single-handedly solve a problem, that leaders commonly overestimate their ability to make sense of information, and that leaders tend to selectively narrow their filters and information channels when under

stress. Rather than under or over-engagement with the issue, she calls for calibrated engagement, and offers guidance for how one might do that. Despite the discomfort and pain caused by dilemmas, ultimately a leader's engagement with them can be transformative and should be seen as an encouragement to growth;

Dilemmas are situations that challenge us because they take us right to the edge of our existing leadership competence. If we recognise them for what they are, they invite us to dig deep, take a leap and transform our practice to the next significant level (p. 182).

Cherry's work is pitched at a slightly more academic audience, which may cause some initial difficulties for those used to reading more widely-aimed works. There are also multiple typos which detract from the readability of the book; quite surprising from a publisher with the stature of Oxford University Press. Furthermore, some of the content can get a little repetitive as chapters tend to recap what has been discussed previously (although this does make non-linear or non-sequential reading easier).

Nevertheless, this is a book that is helpful to ministers and their work. It is a fresh take on an often exhausted subject that provides genuine help for those engaged with the difficult task of leadership. If Cherry's underlying premise is taken to be true; that is, that when we engage with other people's energies and do so in a professional way, that it affects what can be collectively achieved, then this book should give innovative insight to the way we lead, so that we can partner more effectively with God's work of redeeming the world.

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**Curtis, S. (2016). *Reach and Teach: Educational Short-Term Missions as a Ministry of the Local Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.**

Reviewed by Devni Regis

This is a very useful book based on Curtis' experience as a "mobile missionary instructor," it discusses integrating theological education and teaching into Short Term Missions (STM), perhaps replacing the term STM with Educational Short Term Missions where "lay volunteers from American churches" are used to "work with indigenous pastors to create resources that can be used to train other pastors and churches ..." (p. 49).

Curtis argues that in the future short-term missionaries should focus on educating, training and equipping the indigenous leaders rather than only focus on converting people, erecting buildings and tourism. This is especially so because of the risk of new Christians being taught heresy by their pastor or leader due to the lack of education and training they have received from Christian missionaries. "For a pastor to be 'able to teach' and 'able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it' (1Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9), he must be educated" (p. 8).

He cites over sixty references including books and journal articles on Short Term Missions, history of missions, cross cultural missions and the Great Commission, to support his argument in this book. Additionally, he includes a short church survey, a missions survey and ten interviews of pastors originating from Burma, Philippines, Uganda, Nepal, and Ghana to stress the importance of integrating theological education into the area of missions.

He also briefly surveys the history of American missions referring to the contribution of “particular ministries of individual people and larger movements” from which we can learn lessons that are useful for “any new missions paradigm” (p. 12).

Curtis urges that STM’s should be combined with an “adult discipleship program” involving qualified teachers that are part of the team. He also suggests encouraging those with a passion for missions to develop teaching skills and those with a passion for teaching to develop missions skills, and to prepare and mentor short term missionaries.

Curtis provides a railway model as an EDSTM example. “The rails represent the indigenous pastor’s primary means of learning” which is the personal study of the Bible, other resources and experience in ministry. Then “the rail ties represent the EDSTM workshops, where the EDSTMer” can form a relationship with the indigenous pastor to “bridge the gap between the two rails.” The seminars and workshops facilitate the indigenous pastor with “sound biblical and theological training” and in the same manner the pastor’s ministry experiences through his participation in the workshop “brings cultural context to the development” of this model (pp. 49-50).

He also provides ten steps such as Leadership (selecting committed leaders who have a genuine passion to train others), teaching materials/resources, (considering appropriate materials that will be taught), prayerful discernment in selecting the field of service (prayerfully seeking God’s will in choosing to implement this model), building up a relationship with an indigenous pastor (contacting and connecting with the local pastor of the area), forming a team (appointing the appropriate people to be sent into the field), “training in content and culture” (the short-term missionary must have an adequate theological knowledge and be prepared to “interact” with a foreign culture), fundraising (the church must involve its members in raising funds rather than only the board), deployment (preparing the EDSTMer to actually make the move practically by being sent and that requires paying attention to details like visas, vaccinations etc, debriefing (it is important that the missionary are given support to process “their missions encounter”) and “replication” which means maintaining an “ongoing ministry of EDSTM” without it being an one off to facilitate this program (pp. 51-80).

Curtis argues that there is a considerable gap between the work that Long Term Missions accomplishes such as church planting, bible translations, discipleship and the needs of the church, but that STM covers some of those needs such as “humanitarian and development projects.” However theological training remains to be the most unmet need that can be met considerably through the EDSTM model which he proposes (p. 90)

So in conclusion the EDSTM model that Curtis proposes, if followed correctly as explained, will be of great benefit to churches that focus on short term missions and have the appropriate resources to equip their short term missionaries. In the same manner even though this book is mainly addressed to American Christians, it will be of great benefit to Bible College Students, churches and especially to all Christians who take the Great Commission seriously.

**Dreier, M.S.D. (ed) (2013). *Created Led by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.**

Reviewed by Grant Buchanan

*Created Led by the Spirit* is an edited work considering different aspects of planting Missional communities within diverse contexts. “The primary purpose of this book,” Dreier states, “is to extend the mission of church conversation as it relates to the generative work of planting new missional congregations” (xvii). Through 9 articles by various authors, and a concluding sermon by Paul Chung, the book explores biblical, theological, ecclesiological and contextual issues related to a Spirit led missional ecclesiology. The majority of the contributors come from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and, therefore, most of the case studies are from this context.

Setting the scene in Chapter 1, Dreier suggests that “God’s generative building activity makes our own building activity possible, from putting up actual structures to shaping human community... the chapters in this book are thus primarily about the Holy Spirit, who creates and leads us in the development of new congregations” (p. 4). The Holy Spirit both generates community and, in doing so, operates as church planter. Drawing on Acts as a paradigm, she argues that, in the same way that the disciples confronted various cultural, social, political and religious challenges when they went out from Jerusalem, so too church-planters today find themselves going to “all kinds of places, some expected and some surprising, as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit continues today as it did on Acts” (p. 11). A missional hermeneutic, informed by a Trinitarian framework, shapes understanding and implementation of biblical and confessional beliefs, providing a praxis where missional congregations orient themselves and their activities around mission. “Concentrated in the crucified and risen Christ, the perichoretic Trinity imprints us with congregational life that is marked by openness participation, and mutuality in the face of oppression, domination, and inequality” (p. 14). Therefore, planting churches involves the twofold nature of this Trinitarian relationality: that of sending and building community.

Miroslav Volf contributes the second article on human flourishing. Given the title and focus of the book, however, this appears slightly out of place. Although well known for his engagement with the Spirit in much of his writing, here he provides very little. Volf explores hope as primary to human flourishing. “Hope in a Christian sense, is love stretching itself into the future” (p. 27). Volf challenges the prevalent idea that human flourishing comes from the ‘experience of satisfaction.’ Instead, he states “human beings flourish and are truly happy when they centre their lives on God, the source of everything that is true, good, and beautiful” (p. 29). This idea stands in stark contrast with the more recent phenomenon where self is at the centre and God has been moved to the periphery. Volf concludes this section, stating, “when we place pleasure at the centre of the good life, when we decouple it from the love of God, the ultimate source of meaning, and when we sever it from love of neighbour and hope for a common future, we are left... with no way of organising desire into a structure of meaning.” Believing in, and loving God, and, in light of this, loving others as well is central to human flourishing.

The remaining articles each consider the role and purpose of the Spirit in establishing and developing a missional approach to church planting. Each author considers how the biblical narrative provides a basis for a missional theology of the Spirit and how this provides an important framework for establishing missional communities in their own local secular, post-modern and multi-cultural contexts. Lois

Malcolm states in chapter 3, “we live in an area in which the task of discerning the Spirit revolves not only around the reform of Christendom but also around the apostolic proclamation of the gospel in an era that is both post-Christian and post-secular” (p. 46). As she notes, “people no longer simply go to church or believe in God because it is the socially acceptable thing to do.... We seem to be in a ‘new age’ in which Christianity has to be actually *experienced* or *practised* in order for it to be viable for people” (p. 49). This is an important point for anyone considering planting a church into a new urban context.

A common thread throughout the book highlights this point. Paul’s approach to mission helps inform the diversity of cultural contexts the Christian community meets when establishing new churches. Biblical images such as wanderer and stranger, alien and neighbour — themes that define both the Hebrew nation in the Old Testament, and the Christian Community in the New Testament — provide a framework for understanding how the Christian community today can identify themselves within a similar diversity in the world today. As Daniel Anderson notes, each context requires a different expression of worship, of service, of ordained leadership and of a translation of the gospel into “the languages of the micro cultures that abound in our society...” (p. 133).

An affinity with the Trinitarian idea of *perichoresis* is another common thread throughout. This concept reminds us that a missional theology is both relational and one of sending. Again, Daniel Anderson puts it well, “it is the Holy Spirit, in the name of Christ Jesus, to the glory of the father, who creates the church, sends it, and leads it in mission for the sake of God’s mission in the world” (p. 149).

The various case studies provided by the authors help ground their discussions in actual missional contexts and communities—each quite diverse, yet highly contextual. Given that the main denominational context is the ELCA, the diversity of expression is wonderfully fresh.

*Created and Led by the Spirit* provides some insightful though contextual discussion on Spirit-led Missional Church planting; including a timely reminder of the Trinitarian nature of the *missio Dei*. Each author brings something unique from their own culture, context and research to this discussion. Though there is little new theologically, ecclesologically, or missionally, the value of the book lies in reminding us of the mission-sending nature of the Spirit, and the empowerment the Spirit provides us in establishing new faith communities. It reminds us of the necessity to continually reach out beyond our church walls and be truly missional communities — communities that reflect Jesus through the presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and the embodiment of the *missio Dei*.

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**Devenish, S.C. (2017). *Ordinary Saints – Lessons in the Art of Giving Your Life Away*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.**

Reviewed by Christopher Cat

It is refreshing to read a work that is so clearly infused with the author’s own passion and dedication to life, to God and to his audience. *Ordinary Saints* is itself a work of ministry of the very kind the author is seeking to promote. It is an intentional calling out to Christian service for everyday followers of Jesus Christ; a call to be living

witnesses in action and word, and to be an encourager of others to live as disciples of Christ.

Devenish is the director of Postgraduate Studies at Tabor College in Adelaide, South Australia. He draws from his own experiences as a Christian teacher, missionary and discipleship mentor to both Catholic and Protestant priests and pastors as well as from the testimonies of other ordinary saints (usually from his own acquaintance). This gives the book a very engaging and personal flavour that lends sincerity to the appeal and grounds it in relatable, day-to-day living.

Devenish's style is articulate and effectively suited to the educated, lay, Christian leadership he wishes to encourage and instruct. He lays out pertinent themes and ideas clearly with the use of effective headings, concise sections and a purposeful balance of teaching and testimony. He covers the theme from a broad and comprehensive range of perspectives which capture both the potential for success and failure in holy living. He honestly wrestles with the actual struggles of Christian living, including the temptation, suffering and sadness, while also profoundly and deeply eliciting a desire to take on a Christlike, humble, and generous, other-focused service in life.

Devenish's discussion on the divine-human partnership is superb. With enough theological exposition to build the intellectual framework, he adds enough real life example to inspire participation, and then enough practical focus to nurture living application. Into this praxis of exposition, example and application he witnesses the gospel itself in the testimony of Jesus and ordinary saints in such a way that stirs the reader's spirit to the kind of appreciation and gratitude that will motivate the praxis the book is promoting. One comes away from reading the book with a sense of responsibility and empowerment, and a focused sense of God's intention to work effectively in the lives of day-to-day, "ordinary" Christians.

In a commendable effort to show the potential for good in giving up one's own pleasure-seeking for godly living, and the damage caused by self-centred living, Devenish repeatedly builds a construct of the world where the line between Christians and non-believers is marked and dramatic. He neither denies the sinfulness of Christians nor the virtues exercised by some non-Christians, nevertheless his emphasis leans perhaps a little too dogmatically on making stark distinctions that favour Christians while disparaging others. A more complex acknowledgement that God is at work in every person and is not far from each one of us, while making things muddier, may have added to the genuineness of his overall testimony.

In addressing the issue of suffering and pain, Devenish wisely acknowledges that trite theological answers only intensify suffering, and he shows the value of lived experience to create bridges of compassion to the suffering. His exposition of the way God purposefully works through humble, grateful and generous people, who are themselves filled with weaknesses and struggles, is one of the most empowering strengths of his book. Unfortunately, his alignment with theology that sets God up as self-limiting in order to give value to human freedom and a choice to love, while common enough, leaves one faced with a disempowered God and undermines confidence in His creating a sinless future since choice is made necessary to love.

In summary, I would consider this book an excellent read. I would recommend it as devotional and motivational. Reading it is a challenge to answer the author's call with a renewed energy and focus on holy living and a desire to make a loving impact in the world for God.

**Mason K. (2014). *Preventing Suicide: A handbook for Pastors, Chaplains and Pastoral Counsellors*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press.**

Reviewed by Dr. Astrid Staley

Mason's book will prove a worthy addition to any minister's library. It will be of particular help to any in the Christian community involved with suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention care of those bereaved by suicide; it will equip caregivers involved at any level to minister more effectively into this challenging area.

Mason, a psychologist, and associate professor of counseling and psychology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has worked in the mental health field for twenty-six years and brings her expertise to this complex discussion to show practically how pastoral caregivers can be agents of hope to people at risk of suicide. The book first addresses foundational issues in discussions and approaches to suicide before progressing to the more practical component where Mason then shares numerous anecdotes from not only her experience with suicidal people but also those of Christian caregivers in a variety of ministry settings.

The first four chapters are vital for caregivers to explore before engaging practically. Chapter one addresses commonly held preconceived ideas as to who dies by suicide. Here Mason explores what role race, gender, and factors such as biology and mental health play in predicting whether someone will die by suicide. Chapter two shatters ten suicide myths with a primary focus on people within the Christian community evidencing suicidal-ideations (*someone who thinks about suicide, has a plan and the means to carry it out*), which can tragically end in death. These myths are debunked in the "light of Bible and science." Chapter three flows on from the examination of myths about Christians experiencing suicidal-ideations to a theological discussion about Christians who sadly take their life and the historical responses from the church as to their future hope. These three chapters are critical for caregivers to explore, as preconceived ideas and a minister's operating theology can be a hindrance to offering people with suicidal-ideations help, and their readiness to extend comfort to those bereaved by suicide. Self-examination precedes practical engagement. Chapter four then offers an understanding of the historical and contemporary theories to suicide and the importance of a bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach in caring for at-risk people in the Christian community.

Chapters five through to nine, immerse the reader in anecdotes and a multitude of valuable practical strategies in caring for the following five people groups; someone in a suicide crisis (Chapter 5); a survivor of a suicide attempt (Chapter 6); a caregiver (Chapter 7); those bereaved by suicide (Chapter 8), and the faith community (Chapter 9). While some strategies overlap, each group have needs specific to them, which merit understanding when engaging care.

Mason writes in language easily understood by any caregiver with or without prior knowledge on this topic. People with prior understanding or working in this field will no doubt find amongst the strategies offered, something that will contribute to their existing repertoire of approaches. Each chapter is equipped with discussion questions that can be used either in a group setting or for personal reflection. Additional resources are also offered for the reader to refer to if needed. However, the many websites listed as avenues for referring people in crisis will not benefit those located outside of the United States. Caregivers will need to identify appropriate resources from within their community or from country specific websites committed to suicide prevention.

With an increasing number of people, tragically even within the Christian community struggling with suicidal-ideations, it is important for caregivers to equip themselves with the relevant tools to be able to intervene when they find themselves confronted with someone in crisis. This book is certainly a step in that direction.

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**Menzies, R. (2016). *Speaking in Tongues: Jesus and the Apostolic Church as Models for the Church Today*. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press.**

Reviewed by Dr. Jon Newton

Today's contemporary church, at least in the west, has been significantly influenced by Pentecostalism. The older hostility to Pentecostalism on the part of many Protestants has largely evaporated and many evangelical churches are copying at least some aspects of the larger Pentecostal churches like Hillsong, such as their music, positive message and contemporary edge. However, these new Pentecostal churches have also changed significantly from what previous generations experienced from Pentecostalism, especially in their Sunday services.

Tongues-speaking has always been the most controversial feature of the modern "classical" Pentecostal movement and there are signs that aspects of tongues practice are in decline among classical Pentecostals (not only in large contemporary congregations): "tongues and interpretations" in public have become rare in Pentecostal services, the insistence on tongues as the initial evidence of a post-conversion Spirit baptism is less common and there is evidence that fewer members of Pentecostal churches actually speak in tongues either in worship times or in their own prayer life. Hence, although this book is not primarily about contemporary ministry, its appearance is a timely reminder of what classical Pentecostals have stood for and perhaps a hint to contemporary Pentecostals not to neglect speaking in tongues.

Robert Menzies (PhD Aberdeen) is a leading Pentecostal scholar and missionary and currently the Director of the Asian Centre for Pentecostal Theology. He is firmly committed to the classical Pentecostal view but this perspective doesn't prevent him making an inviting, and mostly convincing, biblical case about the value and importance of speaking in tongues. The book does this by exploring the material in Luke-Acts (Part One), the question of Jesus and tongues (Part Two) and the Pauline material on the subject (Part Three) before drawing a series of conclusions. Each chapter discusses relevant biblical passages in some detail, including some analysis of the Greek (sometimes with fresh insights) and different interpretations of key verses. Each chapter then concludes with a summary of Menzies' findings, an application (usually consisting of the experience of a specific Pentecostal minister) and reflection questions.

Some of the discussion is fairly predictable to those familiar with the issues, but the author does make some striking claims. Perhaps the one which will attract the most attention is his argument that Jesus probably spoke in tongues, built on consideration of Luke 10:21 and the use of Psalm 16 in Acts 2:25-28, and that he encouraged his disciples to do so as well. Here Menzies portrays tongues as a prophetic expression of ecstatic joy in the Holy Spirit. Clearly it is hard to be definitive here as the only place where Jesus is explicitly said to mention tongues is in the longer ending of Mark, which is disputed territory, though Menzies discusses this at some length and quite creatively (pp. 68-81). Not everyone will agree with Menzies here, but his case that Jesus probably

spoke in tongues is quite strong and will at least make scholars and ministers think carefully before dismissing it.

It is not possible to summarize all the arguments in this book. Menzies addresses most of the common arguments raised for and against the practice of tongues, especially those based on biblical grounds. He seeks to reconcile Luke and Paul with respect to the value and guidelines for speaking in tongues. He defends the Pentecostal view that speaking in tongues is a practice available to all believers who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. He draws on Bruce Johanson to offer a persuasive resolution of the tensions in Paul's argument about tongues as a sign in 1Cor.14:20-25 (pp. 110-115). He discusses a number of New Testament passages where tongues may be implied even though not explicitly mentioned. He explores the potential uses of tongues in devotional life and in church meetings. One thing I didn't find here, however, was a discussion of the practicalities of public tongues in larger churches, even though Menzies mounts a strong defence of the classical Pentecostal practice of messages in tongues during church services followed by prophecy-like interpretations; in fact perhaps his most startling story relates to such a message in a meeting where Billy Graham was preaching (pp. 153-155).

Menzies clearly wants to encourage ministers to value, practice and encourage others to practice, speaking in tongues. In the Introduction to his book, he urges pastors to overcome three fears "if they want their churches to experience the joy and power of speaking in tongues, and in so doing recapture the power of Pentecost and follow in the apostolic model" (p. 5): the fear of disagreement, the fear of embarrassment and the fear of excess. Clearly Menzies sees the teaching and practice of tongues as central to the growth of Pentecostal churches and to the spiritual health of Pentecostal ministers. This is why I think this book should be read by contemporary ministers.

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**Ortberg, J. (2010). *The Me I Want to Be Participant's Guide with DVD: Becoming God's Best Version of You*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

Our church was looking for a resource as a follow up after hosting an Alpha course. We wanted a series of DVD talks of about 15 minutes each with English subtitles so participants of non-English speaking background can easily follow that talks. We were looking for a discussion guide that would help our diverse group grow in their understanding of God and discipleship. We are a small-sized church, so a small group discussion series would suit us well.

John Ortberg is senior pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in California, and is a master teacher and bestselling author of several books on discipleship. His frameworks on spiritual formation are shaped by Dallas Willard, and his teaching helps show how Jesus-centred spirituality is relevant in everyday life.

*The Me I Want to Be* is Ortberg's teaching series on growing from who we are into the unique and flourishing people who God wants us to be (rather than the "me" I pretend to be, or think I should be, or other people want, or that fails to be, or that I'm afraid God wants). Ortberg teaches about what this means in general and for renewing our mind, redeeming our time, deepening our relationships and transforming our experiences. The material is spread over five talks of 12-15 minutes that introduce a

suggested one hour total session including engagement with 11-16 pages of notes and discussion points per session.

Ortberg captured my imagination when he said on the DVD in a message to pastors that many Christians want to go deeper in their faith, and yet we all need different approaches and frameworks for helping us grow deeper. For example, he discusses different personality types and the sins that particularly tempt each one, and offers checklists to diagnose where we draw life and what most gives us passion. It also urges participants in their encouragement of one another:

Every day, everyone you know faces life with eternity on the line, and life has a way of beating people down. Every life needs a cheering section. Every life needs a shoulder to lawn on once in a while. Every life needs a prayer to lift them up to God. Every life needs a hugger to wrap some arms around them sometimes. Every life needs to hear a voice saying, "Don't give up" (Participant's Guide, p. 61).

The discussion guide offers thoughtful, open-ended questions for discussion, and growth exercises for between sessions. It can be complemented by the more complete book by the same title.

One of the things I most appreciated about the resource is the inviting picture of God whose heart for us is to thrive and to dream big, to enjoy God's gifts and to be dangerously threatening to forces of injustice and apathy. A feature of Ortberg's teaching is the agency of God – the encouragement that your life is God's project not just your own. *The Me I Want to Be* may sound individualistic and self-centred, but it leads participants to think bigger than our own needs and agendas, for example:

How will you recognize your mountain? There is no formula. Just as in every other area of your growth, your mountain will not look exactly like anyone else's. But often you will recognize it because it lies at the intersection of the tasks that tap into your greatest strengths and the needs that tap into your deepest passions. You know this for sure: *God has a mountain with your name on it* (Participant's Guide, p. 83).

John Ortberg's *The Me I Want to Be* is a thought-provoking DVD teaching series relevant for small groups or churches interested in exploring spiritual growth, identity, life-giving relationships and vocation.

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**Pletcher, J. E., & Hall-Pletcher, H. (2016). *EmotiConversations*. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications.**

Reviewed by Elizabeth Wills

There is a wide variety of books on the market dealing with the subject of emotions, many of which could be described as self-help books. *EmotiConversations* is different in that it is not a self-help book so much as a book of stories (personal, historical and biblical) which includes comments describing the emotional reactions of people in various situations. It is a thought-provoking book which stresses the importance of recognizing and wrestling with our emotions. Pastor and lecturer John Pletcher has teamed up with his mother, Holly, a retired educator and administrator to challenge the reader to view the workplace as providing a significant, meaningful opportunity for spiritual growth, in what is for most people, a secular environment. The message of the

book is intentionally redemptive, suggesting that instead of ‘stuffing’ our emotions and distancing ourselves from others when faced with difficulties, we should let God use our emotions to grow us and transform us into the image of Christ – ‘for the sake of others’.

The thesis of the book is that human flourishing depends upon our entire substance mind, heart, actions and body must live in right relationship to God, self, others and creation. The text is biblically-based using the book of Ruth as a framework for discussing life’s difficulties. It is easy to read with questions for reflection at the end of each of its eight chapters. One hundred and fifty-nine pages in total, including authors’ profiles and a solid bibliography, the book would appeal to those who are inspired by stories of tragedy and triumph. Author John Pletcher is of the belief that generally speaking, we don’t do emotions well and that includes church leaders. Having been on the receiving end of anger and hostility from those on his ministry team when he tried to implement some changes, the book is intended for church leaders and parishioners alike. It would also lend itself for use in discussion groups as it has a relaxed style and could be used as a jumping off point for discussing emotional issues in a non-threatening way.

A basis for understanding the important connection between emotions and brain function is provided in the first chapter with reference to research by William James and others, linking the body and emotions. Reference is also made to the seminal work of Joseph LeDoux who studied the amygdala and its connection to emotional response. The time-honoured work of David Seamands and Daniel Goleman is also considered in the understanding of emotional intelligence and well-being.

The reader is invited to engage with the text through compelling stories of grief, loss and tragedy with all the accompanying emotions - anger, fear, disappointment, sadness, despair, joy and hope. The importance of strong friendships and how we depend on others in times of crisis is illustrated in Chapter Four by the story of Major General Ulysses S. Grant, and Brigadier General William Sherman in the American Civil War, and how their friendship sustained them and may have turned the tide of the war.

The strength of *EmotiConversations* can be seen in the argument mounted for total commitment to God’s cause - spirit, soul, body - learning to love God and others with our whole being, trusting God completely, just as Naomi did in the book of Ruth as she waited for God’s redemption of her tragedy. A possible limitation however, is that there is no clear explanation of how to achieve this. It is suggested that we should “apply healthy emotions in pursuit of personal spiritual development” (p. 7). This is confusing, as it seems to be contradicting the argument in the book.

From the hermeneutical perspective, the book has some problems with lack of balance. Emotional growth goes hand in hand with spiritual growth which occurs as we abide in Christ, applying the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, obedience and learning to overcome in the spiritual battle waged against us daily. This important teaching was overlooked in the many references to transformation. Also, simply tracing the narrative of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz, was not always effective for explaining how to gain control of our emotions. The implication throughout the book is that by dealing with our emotions we will be transformed. This seems to be putting the ‘cart before the horse,’ and throws in a subtly confusing message for the reader, as the Bible teaches that it is the Holy Spirit who brings about spiritual and emotional change as our minds are renewed according to God’s Word. A discussion along these lines, perhaps even with fewer stories, would have strengthened the book’s impact. In summary, while

*EmotiConversations* certainly provides helpful insights for anyone involved in people helping professions, the over-emphasis on emotional development at the expense of a robust presentation of the importance of spiritual development, is a significant limitation.

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**Smith, J. K. A. (2016). *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids, MI: BrazosPress.**

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw  
Kindle version

With thinking about education shaped by modernity, it is natural to think that we teach by transferring knowledge. James K A Smith teaches as Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College and writes some of the most helpful material I have read on worship, formation, teaching practices and ministry in a post-secular era. He suggests that people truly learn and implement things in their lives not from mere information transfer or confession of belief, but by adopting new habits or practices that recalibrate what we love. We are not merely thinking beings but characterized by what we love: “Jesus is a teacher who doesn’t just inform our intellect but forms our very loves. He isn’t content to simply deposit new ideas into your mind; he is after nothing less than your wants, your loves, your longings” (loc. 100).

When we understand the spiritual power of habit, there are obvious implications for education, especially for character and virtue. Learning virtue is not about memorizing content but more about imitation and practice - more like practicing piano scales than studying music theory. Growing disciples of Jesus, therefore, happens best as people adopt habits, practices and liturgies that re-form their affections and desires.

There are also implications for worship. Smith reclaims the importance of historic approaches to worship - including the call to worship, prayer of confession, celebration of sacraments, powerfully poetic and storied liturgy and sending the people of God into their Monday through Saturday week and discipleship project that worship nourishes them for. He actually warns against novelty and innovation in worship, arguing that imaginative power for a postmodern world will more likely come from reclaiming ancient forms of worship and reconnecting with the biblical story. Thus he presents a high view of worship, arguing worship is the crucible of discipleship, or the “imagination station” that steers our loves toward God’s kingdom.

Smith also offers advice for parents to integrate liturgies in the home, for teachers aiming to form students they meet in classrooms, and for leaders of children’s and youth ministry (including not to ignore spiritual practices for fear of “boring” young people).

He also explains how “secular” liturgies misdirect or miscalibrate our longings. To be human is to worship - the choice is what we worship. However, this is more often subconscious or chosen for us by the societal forms that surround us. Smith masterfully exegetes the shopping mall, university and wedding and shows how they direct our loves and ideals towards consumerism, autonomy and self-concern. He encourages adopting a “liturgical examen” to consider what routines shape us and to what ends.

*You Are What You Love* expands on Smith’s passion for formative practices in worship and education. It is highly recommended reading for pastors, worship leaders,

teachers and parents. Ultimately it offers valuable insights for any Christian serious about understanding how habits form, disform or reform them and why we need Kingdom-focused rituals.

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**Tripp Y. (2016). *The End of Captivity? A Primates Reflections on Zoos, Conservation, and Christian Ethics*. Eugene, OR: Cascade.**

Reviewed by Grant Buchanan

Go figure. A book about zoos. Yes you read right - a book about zoos ... where they keep animals ... for our entertainment. But this is more than a book about zoos. It is also a book about shoveling poop - his term not mine, and ethics. This short book (134 pages and with pictures!), turned out to be an informative read that responds to the question 'what is the *end* of captivity?'

Tripp York writes, not as an activist, although he has been one in the past and has many misinformed activists engage in debate and dialogue with him, he writes as an advocate for the animal kingdom. He even went worked at a local zoo to find out what actually goes on in zoos and why zoos may be necessary to the survival of many animals.

Interspersed with brief, at times witty interludes after each chapter, York highlights how the interaction between humans and animals is far more complex than dominator and dominated that many tend to think. There is a greater interrelatedness in the interaction between humans and animals, highlighted by the squirrel monkey, whom York named "Jeeves", who climbed a tree, took aim and deliberately pooped on him (p. 70).

The first part of the book explores various philosophical, theological and political positions people hold regarding the ethics of the existence of zoos. York notes that "the reactions that zoos evoke from people are as varied as the animals within them" (p. 22). While the ideal would be to have animals free to roam within their native habitat, York discusses the weaknesses and potential unrealistic view that this holds. For sure, "the more natural the habitat the more inclined visitors are to view the animals ... in a more positive light" (p. 5, n. 3). This being said, modern zoos are far removed from earlier expressions where animals were on display and controlled purely for the entertainment of humans. Zoos today provide protection to endangered species, make breeding and releasing programs possible, financially support wildlife conservation, educate people about the animals and their habitats, and provide research opportunities for conservation and biodiversity (p. 5). In the US, zoos annually attract greater numbers of visitors than all of the sporting events combined (p. 20). Zoos are therefore potential "Gateways to the wild, metaphorically and practically" (p. 11).

York continually challenges us to consider our own part in eliminating the need for zoos in particular in the way we engage our environment, especially since humanity is the greatest enemy to many natural habitats. In chapters three and four, York discusses issues of captivity and freedom of animals. As he rightly notes, many animals that have been released into their natural habitats haven't survived. This is often because their natural habit has been reduced or impacted by human interaction; or because the actual habitat is itself a hostile environment. Many well-known animal advocates such as Jane Goodall with the gorillas, and Steve Irwin in Australia, have highlighted environmental

issues impacting animal habitats as well as educating us about their beloved animals. This does not so much endorse the existence of zoos and wildlife parks, but suggests we cannot avoid them. Because humans intervene in the world through urbanization, the associated infrastructure of roads, tunnels and bridges, increased farming to meet the needs of population growth etc., “non-intervention is impossible ... the question is not *whether* we are going to intervene, the question is *how* we are going to intervene” (p. 9).

The second half of the book (separated by photos), explores the ethical responsibility of humans to respond appropriately as God’s image bearers to creation. In chapter four, ‘The Ongoing Task of Adam’, York sees the act of naming the animals, in Genesis 2, as an act of power. “Through the act of naming, we determine an animal’s purpose in relation to us” (p. 69). We classify and name animals in four distinct ways. Firstly, the scientific name classifies “the genus and species (rooted in a larger, hierarchical, tree of life)” based on the properties of the animals, or where they were first discovered, for example, the Boa is *Corallus caninus*, so named for its ferocious bite (p. 69). Secondly, the common name is often associated with an entire species, e. g., ‘cows’, ‘cats’ etc. Thirdly, is the name we give to an individual animal (e. g., ‘Larry’ the Boa bit York’s friend, Dennis). This is all part of the interaction between humanity and the animal kingdom. York is concerned most with a fourth nomenclature, the practice of naming animals based on their use to us e. g., ‘meat’. By naming animals this way we determine how they are going to live or die, and it is here that we wield the most power (p. 71).

While he is not against us holding this responsibility, York is concerned we have forgotten the place of animals within God’s good creation. Numerous passages reveal four things. “First, animals do not belong to us, they belong to God.” Second, their purpose is to serve God; third, “God cares for animals, both humans and non-humans”; fourth, according to York, these animals will reside with us in God’s future kingdom (p. 75). Our dominion of creation therefore, is rooted in God’s dominion. In the Genesis narrative and subsequent scriptures regarding God and creation, we find a God who serves creation by nurturing it. Just as Jesus lowered himself, and gave himself for the sake of all creation, we, in light of his example, should respond accordingly to each other and the wider creation (p. 77).

York does not hide that he is vegetarian; but he does not impose it on others. He does however challenge the inconsistency of many animal advocates who would die for the sake of the Gorillas, yet not blink an eye to the millions of farm animals slaughtered each year for food (p. 87). The issue is not the position one takes on eating food, but the inconsistency of a desire for the rights of some animals and the ignorance of the plight of other animals caged and raised in harsher environments to meet a growing consumer demand (pp. 84-99).

York concludes his exploration of zoos, conservation and ethics, by reiterating the reality of the world we inhabit. The natural world revolves around the survival of the fittest, where faster and stronger species feed off others. Within this reality we are challenged to consider our part as both humans who represent God, but also as species in relation to other species. We should not forget our place in the world habitat, but we must do so living towards the eschatological reality where the lion will lay down with the lamb (Is. 11). But in-between Eden and the new creation, we must also recognize the ongoing struggle that exists in the journey towards the ultimate completion. If we can

comprehend this, and remain faithful to our understanding of creation, we can help others know “there is an alternative to this vision of a world at odds with itself” (p. 114).

*The End of Captivity* is a delightful, informative, yet also a challenging read. There are some concerns regarding York’s theology; however, his light-hearted approach to many of the issues raised makes this a book that will be difficult to forget, especially whenever we pat our pet, eat a steak or hotdog, visit the zoo, watch animal planet ... or ... read our Bibles.

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**West, M.A, (2012). *Effective Teamwork: Practical Lessons from Organizational Research*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) PUB West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons**

Review by Allannah Lauder

Churches today are increasingly discovering the strength of effective teamwork for achieving their goals as an organisation while also improving the wellbeing of their members. M.A. West, from Lancaster University Management School and the Work Foundation and a leading business consultant in UK, draws from a wealth of experience in team management and extensive research in this discussion of team culture.

West argues for “real teams” as a superior organisational model in the business world and voluntary organisations, even the military. His argument is framed in terms of two key factors: “team task functioning and team socio-emotional climate” (p. 2). No team can be effective unless both of these factors are operating well. On the other hand, being in a “real team” enhances these two factors. Moreover, he urges, “creating and sustaining effective teams requires persistent renewal and discovery of good practice” (p. 5).

West is points out that term ‘realness’ exists on a sliding scale and a large percentage of teams are in fact ‘pseudo teams’. A “real team” is distinguished from pseudo-teams and work groups by factors such as “shared objectives, interdependence and review meetings” (p. 14) which West contends are the basic dimensions of team working.

The book has four parts. Part one deals with defining effectiveness and the importance of task and social “reflexivity”, the processes of communication and group reflection. A key element here is the relational aspect: “feeling valued... is a prerequisite for...offering ideas for new and improved ways of ensuring team effectiveness” (p. 6). This not only has direct impact on effectiveness and wellbeing, but as illustrated through various case studies, can even lead to loss of life in, say, a military operation.

Part two looks at team development including the knowledge, skills and attitudes required, the importance and value of team diversity and “how teams and organisations assess whether they are doing things right versus whether they are doing the right things” (p. 69). West also shows the advantage of people-focused, as opposed to task-focused, leadership that emerges from the ground up and is facilitated from the top down. On the other hand, ‘favouritism’ in which “leaders typically behave in a way which communicates there is an ‘in group’ and an ‘out group’ building resentment and undermining team effectiveness” (p. 70), can be a fatal flaw.

Part three addresses the vision, purpose and thinking that is paramount for teamwork. Poor habits like “groupthink” and ‘team defensive systems’ that “are...designed to reduce pain and embarrassment and in doing so can inhibit team

functioning, [to] maintain the status quo” can prevent the team from dealing with the root cause of the problems they face (p. 140). West touches on ‘the importance of two-way relationships’ (or lack of) “in which *all* [Italics mine] members both give and receive support” (p. 174) and learn from each other.

Part four focuses on teams in organisations, and new to the third edition is the inclusion of chapters on ‘Top Management’ and ‘Virtual Teams’. West contends “that there is huge unrealised potential of teams and that this is locked away by the failure of the organisational leaders to recognise that teams will work only to the extent that the organisation is structured around and values team working in practice” (p. 202).

In each chapter, West provides practical guidance in the form of clearly stated key learning points, chapter reviews, topic focuses, case studies and exercises which, in keeping with his philosophy, provoke pointed self-reflection and evaluation. Additionally each chapter ends with a further reading list and web resources. As a result of the thorough examination of each topic, West provides a tool for assessing causes of ineffectiveness and how to deal with them.

Due to the sheer volume and degree of nuanced points, many are often only noted and not fully explored. However, this enables the practitioner to apply West’s techniques to any given team, irrespective of its cultural uniqueness. Additionally, the main thrust of each chapter is repeated excessively, although this is in part due to each topic being addressed from a multitude of perspectives. For example, within the topic of virtual team, decision-making is tackled from numerous standpoints including, but not limited to; the role of values such as trust and cohesion, forms of communication, the complexity of content, the impact of asynchronous and synchronous technologies and virtual conflict management.

Perhaps the book’s greatest strength, especially for those in ministry, is its attention to the qualities in the people and communities that building teams in this fashion can produce. Within the framework of feedback, risk, mental health, effectiveness, adaptability, continued learning, social responsibility and stakeholder focus, West invariably paints a picture highly applicable to ministry. It is one of togetherness, transparency, transformation and trust within a community with shared purpose and value, which is self-governing, inclusive and people-centric. As explored in the chapter on ‘Top Management Teams’, West shows that common expectations placed by churches on Senior Pastors, the breath of the required skill set for the role, and their potential isolation could be ameliorated by team leadership.

West’s extensive research of secular business practices, when applied to a faith community, facilitates a culture that is both biblical and culturally relevant today. It is an approach to teamwork that is congruent with, not counter-productive to, an increasing maturity within the Body often sought by those in ministry. Furthermore the organisational structure of a church, when formed around teams, acts as a discipling tool for all levels of leadership, reducing the need for programs and addressing systemic issues of control and hierarchy. This book is therefore an invaluable reference guide for anyone (especially ministry leaders) serious about building teams.