

Book Reviews

book review editor Dr Stephen Parker

Gordon T. Smith, *Wisdom From Babylon: Leadership for the Church in a Secular Age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 189 pages.

In *Wisdom from Babylon*, Gordon T. Smith (President and Professor of Systematic and Spiritual Theology at Ambrose University, Calgary, Canada) addresses the question of what it means to prepare leaders for a church in a secular age. Drawing widely from his experiences in ecclesiology, spirituality and theological education, Smith argues that rather than seeing the secular context as a hostile environment from which one must either escape or confront, it provides instead an opportunity for the Church to truly be the Church. That is, the secular turn requires the Church to re-evaluate its understanding of ecclesiology and its mission in the world. In order to explore this theme, Smith divides the book into two parts: The first is an introduction and description of the potential ecclesial responses to the reality of secularisation in the West; the second is an analysis of the required competencies and practices of effective leadership in a secular context. Both parts are essential reading for anyone involved in Christian leadership, and particularly theological education, in Western contexts today.

Part 1 opens with a discussion on the phenomenon of secularisation and summarises four contemporary responses to this present reality: Go Along to Get Along; Monastic Retreat; Fighting the Culture War; and Being a Faithful Presence. Noting that all four responses have strengths and weaknesses, Smith asks the important question of what history and Christian experience can bring to the table. Here he draws from four specific examples, each providing a real illustration of how to respond in such contexts.

The first example, from which the title of the book is drawn, is the wisdom literature from the exilic and post-exilic prophets of Israel. The advice here is to 'seek the welfare of the city' (Jer 29:7) and to understand that the exile, for all its horror and destruction, nonetheless lies within the providential plan of God. What, Smith asks, would it look like if we viewed the secularisation of Western society in the same way? Should we fight it, or should instead the Church be asking what God wants us to do in the midst of it? The second example is that of the early Church and here Smith draws

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particularly from Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo. Both men navigated a complex political and cultural situation and Smith draws parallels from their approaches to today's world. The third example is that of minority churches who lived, worshipped and ministered in hostile contexts. Drawing on accounts from Christian communities in Japan, Pakistan, Algeria and China, Smith demonstrates that being the Church in a context that is opposed to the message of the gospel is not new, even if the current generation of the Church in certain contexts is feeling it for the first time. The final example is that of the Church in contemporary Europe which went through the secularisation process in the last century. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jacques Ellul and Lesslie Newbigin provide the dialogue partners here. Part 1 concludes with a revisitation of the four approaches to secularisation in the light of the historic examples discussed.

To summarise the argument of Part 1, the secular turn in the West should not be seen as a threat to the Church but rather as an opportunity for the Church to remain faithful to its calling of being an alternative community within that culture. To therefore frame the question of the Church's response in terms of fight or flight is to miss the opportunity that lies before us in its entirety. For this reviewer, the value of Part 1 is found primarily in this exhortation.

Part 2 then deals with the question of 'where to from here'. That is, given a secular Western context for the church, what direction should Church leadership take? Smith points out that this is an important question not only for Church leaders but also for theological educators who are preparing ministers for this context. Two points are highlighted: (a) intentionality on the part of Christian leaders and communities to develop specific competencies to minister within secular environments; and (b) any engagement in the secular context must be done ecumenically.

Smith argues that three specific competencies are necessary for Church leaders and indeed, Christian communities, in a secular age. These are liturgical, catechetical and missional competencies. Liturgical because Christian communities must engage authentically with the risen and ascended Christ. This, says Smith, is what cultivates the 'distinctive identity of what it means to be the people of God' (116). Secondly, the community must be catechetical in that it teaches and learns together what it means to live the authentic and ancient faith. Thirdly, the community must be missional for it should witness to the reign of Christ through both word and deed. One might argue

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that these competencies are not specific to a secular context and should be considered the *sine qua non* of any Christian community. And that is the point. Regardless of the context in which the Church finds itself, it must first of all understand who it is and what it is called to be before it can engage in any meaningful way in the world.

This is the real value of what Smith has presented, a reminder that in any context in which it finds itself, the Church has a calling to be the people of God and that its response is not to try and fix the world but rather authentically be who we are meant to be. Hence the call towards the end of the book to foster ecumenical relationships between Christian communities. Not with the aim of removing diversity across Christian communities, but instead working together as a visible witness to the unity of the Church within the world. Here lies the strength of the book, in its reminder that the Church should not be afraid of the secular and indeed, anti-Christian change that is sweeping across the West but rather see it is an opportunity to better demonstrate what the Church actually is – an authentic alternative community that lives together in celebrated diversity under the reign and rule of Christ.

If there is a weakness to the book it lies in its relative brevity. Whilst the chapters are well written they really only introduce important concepts, and the reader is often left wanting further analysis and discussion. Perhaps that is the genius of the work in that it whets the appetite for more. Helpfully, Smith foreshadowed such a desire, and he provides an extensive range of resources at the end of the work, collated into relevant topics to aid the reader in further study. In every generation, Christians must ask the question, 'how then shall we live'? In *Wisdom from Babylon* Smith answers by offering some clear guidelines for a Church navigating life and ministry within a secular, post-Christendom context.

Peter Laughlin

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Graham Joseph Hill, *Holding Up Half the Sky: A Biblical Case for Women Leading and Teaching in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 109 pages.

Graham Hill has ventured into a well-populated academic sphere with his book *Holding up Half the Sky*. In the past two decades evangelical scholars have contributed prolifically to the debate of whether there is a biblical foundation for women leading and teaching in churches. Ironically, while the debate proceeded with much ink spilled by both the complementarian and egalitarian sides, globally, faithful women have continued to preach, teach, lead and minister in churches while others have found their path to ministry blocked.

Hill divides his book into three sections: the context of the debate; the biblical basis for the egalitarian position; and practical application of the stance of biblical equality. In doing this, Hill is to be commended in offering a broader perspective of the issue, one that recognises cultural divides, historical and current perspectives, sociological implications, and the all-important practicality of how we uphold biblical equality in our churches and Christian organisations. Too often, academics have approached the debate as purely an exegetical exercise but have not offered many answers to the questions from women ministers and women called to ministry. These women, and the men in their lives and work, want to know how to make biblical egalitarianism work in their personal and professional lives.

In the short first section “Setting the Scene for Biblical Equality” Hill outlines a range of reasons for the heated and complex nature of the debate. This section is helpful, not just for the insights into the cultural divisions in the church over the issue, but also for the naming and answering of three common false allegations made against biblical egalitarianism. While maintaining his egalitarian stance, Hill is humble in his acknowledgment that evangelicals, who affirm the Bible as their primary authority, can interpret the same texts and reach different conclusions. He calls for tolerance and honouring of those who may disagree. The reader will be impressed by the frequent acknowledgement of the contribution of women historically and currently and for the recognition of allowing women their voice.

The second section deals with the examination of the biblical case for equality and is the longest in the book (64 pages). After a brief discussion of Jesus’ attitude to women and the theology of the Creation narratives, the author shifts to the Pauline writings.

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The standard exegetical approach to Paul's writings is outlined clearly before four key background issues are examined: Hellenistic culture, household codes, heresies and biblical issues that influenced Paul's teachings. Hill asserts Paul viewed ministry as Spirit-empowered and service-focused and provides a list of women who were in leadership and ministry under Paul's apostleship. The remainder of the section is taken up with the examination of the Pauline difficult texts over which evangelical scholars disagree, the texts any exploration of the debate must address: Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:26-40; Eph 5:21-33; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 3:1-13. In addition, Hill offers a theological reflection on the importance of the coming on the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the trinitarian-eternal-subordination issue and ends with a summary of the biblical position.

While Hill does not claim to offer an extensive examination of each text (there have been whole books written on single passages) what he provides is sufficient to make his case to his chosen audience. He also does not claim to "advance anything original" (p 1) but he does draw together recent and important scholarly contributions to support his argument (Giles, Fee, Westfall, Mowczko to name but a few). Hill writes clearly, persuasively and with a strong grasp of the breadth and nuances of the topic.

It is in the third section, Embracing the Practices of Biblical Equality that the added value of this book is found. Hill addresses his first remarks to male leaders, particularly in the Church, challenging them in the areas of sexual abuse, toxic masculinity and domestic violence, asking that the voice of women be taken seriously. He then challenges common hierarchal views of ministry and offers his own well-founded definition of leadership – servanthship. Then follows fifteen practical ways to empower and release women leaders – they are sound, sensible and any Christian woman leader would add a hearty amen to each one. It is disappointing to note that because this is written by a male leader it will gain more traction than if a woman had written it.

When I told some women ministers and women leaders that I was reviewing a new book on the biblical case for women leading, the overwhelming response was along the lines of "Another one? Do we need another one?" That was an indication that these women had already grappled with, and been convinced of, the biblical basis for their ministry. The converted, however, are not the intended audience of this book. It is written to convince men and women in local churches that gifted women can and should be leading and teaching in these environments.

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If there is a disappointment in the book, it is in the aim not to add anything original to the biblical case. The debate is not over and any new contribution to the understanding of the difficult passages can only add credence to the case for biblical equality. While the book definitely achieves Hill's aim of providing an "introductory biblical case" for biblical equality it would have been an enhancement to have seen Hill's own fine academic scholarship offering new insights.

This book will be of benefit to people who have not entered into the debate in any depth or have entered, become confused or overwhelmed, and left. Its greatest addition to the debate is a clarion call to practical implementation of the theological stance of biblical equality. It provides enough biblical, contextual and practical input to further the cause for biblical equality in the Church. Recommended for lay leaders, theology students, clergy and any man or woman interested in this vital issue.

Cheryl McCallum

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Joel McKerrow, *Woven: A Faith for the Dissatisfied* (Sydney: Acorn Press, 2019), 225 pages.

McKerrow's book boasts an impressive array of endorsements, reflective of the profile built by the author over a decade of performance, poetry and advocacy. His latest offering is a blend of memoir, theological reflection, imperative appeal and poetic manifesto, very much "Bildungsroman" in feel. One gets the sense that this book was written to be read aloud—not surprising, coming from McKerrow—and indeed, he narrates the accompanying audiobook with his characteristic modulations of rhythm, providing an immersive experience for readers who prefer to listen.

The text is organised into three sections, titled as metaphors for stages in a dynamic maturation: the Sculpted self, Unravelling self and Woven self. These are suggestive of McKerrow's dialectical journey from unquestioned stability to total destabilisation, and then to a new form of groundedness in faith and selfhood.

Each of these three sections begins with a story that represents metaphorically the book's metanarrative and this is indicative of McKerrow's style; layered imagery is emotively jam-packed into passionate reflections on faith, doubt, hope and growth, crystallised in the author's autobiographical anecdotes. In particular, McKerrow's

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stories validate the ubiquitous yet enduringly difficult maturation that occurs when one has grown up in a tight-knit and tightly bounded community (for McKerrrow, conservative Anglicanism and then charismatic evangelicalism), but then begins to find the conceptual schemas of these communities insufficient for life's complexities. McKerrrow presses readers and their communities to be open to learning from, and being reshaped by, emerging dissonances within stated beliefs; importantly, he urges inclusiveness and supportiveness toward those in the midst of such disjointing experiences.

McKerrrow also questions the final usefulness of enduring anger and resentment towards those initial and outgrown community contexts, while not shrinking from confessing his own difficult feelings and acknowledging their place in grief. These themes will connect with anyone struggling to reconcile what they have known with what they are becoming and is a welcome encouragement to graciousness in such seasons. As such, this book may be significant for those in ministry seeking further insight into, or solidarity within, such experiences.

The application of this book for contemporary ministry will go as deeply as allowed; it is not a text that promises neat answers, though McKerrrow does find significant moments of resolution through the 'rebuilding' process that occurs after deconstruction. Certainly, the stories and poetry woven throughout the text offer themselves for meaningful liturgical use; they give voice to questions, doubts and sorrows as valid components of communal Christian devotion. Much of McKerrrow's push back is directed towards conservative evangelicalism and insular Pentecostalism, and perhaps it is within such contexts McKerrrow's story can be most significant, as offering humane solidarity in what can feel like dire situations of destabilisation. McKerrrow reminds us that such destabilisation is not terminal, nor even problematic.

Theologically, the book incorporates a wide range of voices, possibly more than McKerrrow realises. It engages with crucial theological questions and their philosophical counterparts, particularly as it seeks an integral way of articulating a ground of faith and the nature of faith, beyond pre-critical authoritarian pronouncements. There are hints that McKerrrow doesn't yet quite land where he wants to land—but in some ways, this is part of the honesty and realism of the narrative; certainly McKerrrow confesses that we are always, at once, 'sculpted', 'unravelling' and 'woven' in different ways, inevitably left with loose ends and dropped stitches. Accepting life's tensions, gaps

and remainders is enjoined by McKerrow, and he strives to allow this within himself and to reiterate his acceptance of it within his readers.

It will be excellent to see McKerrow's philosophical capacity consolidate in future works, as he is increasingly able to discern the hued strands in the larger threads of his thought, and to tie these in with wider historical debates and theological developments. McKerrow does reference a variety of sources throughout, and this gives a sense of his being engaged in a wider network of dialogue. Continued consolidation will refine a striking energy that is pressing toward a more inclusive, gentler world.

Sarah Bacaller

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Robyn Wrigley-Carr, *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill* (London: SPCK. 2020), 173 pages.

I was introduced to the writings of Evelyn Underhill some years ago as I was drawn into a search for a more contemplative expression of my faith. Quotes and snippets of her prayers turned up as I sought wisdom from those who had gone before in deepening their prayer life through silence, solitude and retreat. Evelyn became a dearer companion still when I was gifted with her prayers in "Evelyn Underhill's Prayer Book" (also by Robyn Wrigley-Carr). I became curious as I read and began to use these prayers in my own life and ministry. Here was a woman who had spent many years ardently pursuing God, not only through a life of prayer, but also with the assistance and influence of other Christians to whom she looked for guidance. Who and what were these influences? How had she become someone who not only found an intimate relationship with God but whose life also became a deeply encouraging force for so many who knew her?

Robyn Wrigley-Carr's new book *The Spiritual Formation of Evelyn Underhill* reveals the influences on Evelyn's life which enabled her to become not only one of the most widely read writers on mysticism and spiritual practice in the 20th century, but also a much-loved spiritual director and retreat leader. One of the strongest of these influences was her relationship with Baron Friedrich von Hugel. Von Hugel was a Catholic layperson, religious philosopher and Evelyn's spiritual director over a period

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of four years. Wrigley-Carr paints an intimate portrait of the man of whom Evelyn wrote: “I owe him my whole spiritual life” (p2).

The Baron was a “thinker, prophet, contemplative and father of souls” (p16), a remarkable person whose “passionate sense of God” and “special gift for friendship” (p15) combined to powerfully draw people into life-giving relationship with God. Evelyn’s inner life was profoundly impacted by the way he gently but firmly guided her to seek and trust patiently in God’s initiating and sustaining presence. Encouraging her to balance her intellectual knowledge about God, her experiential and devotional practices and an involvement in the church and Christian tradition, the Baron sought to help Evelyn acquire a deep stillness of soul and intimate connection with God. This would enable her to become “caught up in the embrace of God (p75)” and would lead her to become someone who would herself be a gifted guide and nurturer of souls.

Evelyn’s own life is beautifully detailed in the book. Aside from her friendship with the Baron, other life experiences contributed to her spiritual development. These included her home and education, her marriage, the First World War, her reading of the mystics and her own mystical experiences, her connection with various arms of the church and even her early contact with an occult order. Wrigley-Carr’s description of these reminds us that nothing is wasted by God. At age 32, Evelyn was invited to begin offering spiritual direction to what became a steady stream of directees. This led her to expand her ministry of the care of souls to include leading retreats, which became for her a passion and deep joy. The book opens a window into the way Evelyn guided her directees (strongly influenced by the way she had been directed by the Baron) and led retreats, many at the Retreat House in Pleshey, UK, she loved so well and where her famous prayer books were amazingly discovered by Wrigley-Carr in 2016.

The chapters on Evelyn as spiritual director and retreat leader spoke most deeply to me. At times I felt as though I was being directed by Evelyn herself, if not the Baron through her. As a seeker of intimacy with God, I was reminded that spiritual formation is a slow process - my role is to be patient with God as initiator, responding in humility and child-likeness. Evelyn counselled me to slow my pace in life, to make sure I am resting well, taking regular retreats to deepen my life of prayer, connection and commitment to God. She refreshed me with the truth that prayer is our whole-of-life response to God’s initiative of love. Contemplation and action form a seamless life of

prayer in which God is constantly abiding in and with us as our lives are transformed by God's grace.

As a retreat leader and spiritual director in training, I drank deeply from Evelyn's wisdom as received from the Baron – "caring matters most" (p86). God is the "true spiritual director" (p10). My role is to "simply have confidence in God's work, provide reassurance, encouragement and discernment, and not get in the way" (p97). Quiet listening to the directee and discernment of the Spirit's movement are key to being a conduit for God's action within them. Ultimately, it is my own inner life with God which will have the greatest impact on the atmosphere of a direction session or leadership of a retreat.

This is a book that will guide and encourage those who are involved in the care of souls in a pastoral capacity, as a spiritual director or retreat leader. They will find both Evelyn and Baron Von Hugel to be worthy and wise mentors in the journey towards spiritual growth and effective ministry.

Jenny Ross

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Denise Cooper-Clarke and Stephen Hale (eds), *Excellence in Leadership: Essays in Honour of Peter and Merrill Corney* (Sydney: Acorn Press, 2017), 228 pages.

Excellence in Leadership is a volume of essays honouring Peter and Merrill Corney, which was released for Peter's 80th birthday. An Australian Anglican minister, Peter has been associated with St Hillary's Anglican Church in East Kew since the 1960s, from pioneering new forms of youth ministry, to being the Vicar of the parish, to continued engagement following retirement from full time ministry. He similarly played pivotal roles in the establishment of Arrow Leadership Australia, Mustard, Oak Tree and various theological training programs.

The book covers a large range of topics that throw light on Peter's lifetime of ministry. After an opening chapter of biography there are discussions of his writing, preaching, the use of music, art, and drama in ministry, family and youth ministry, and formation of new leaders. Each chapter accounts for Peter's activity and thinking on the topic, and widens the view out to long-term implications. This method offers fascinating

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glimpses of a varied and innovative ministry, and many challenges and opportunities for those engaged with church leadership in the present.

Reading from a more catholic expression of Anglicanism, there are three strands that stand out as having relevance to the wider Anglican and Christian family.

Peter's ministry at St Hilary's saw pioneering of new pastoral models. In his earlier phase of ministry this centred on youth ministry. The church neighbourhood lent itself well to focussing on this demographic in the 1960s, since it was a well-established suburb with a high concentration of private schools. This took shape in Peter's growing capacity to read the signs of the times and develop forms of worship and evangelism that responded to the new youth culture through discussion and music, grounded in the Jesus Movement. When he came to work in the diocesan Department of Christian Education Peter developed (co-educational!) adventure camps where a more systematic approach to peer-group evangelism developed. In 1973 Peter and Merrill moved their focus to The Master's Workshop, which emerged as part of a wider Christian response to the counterculture and sought to offer practical responses to the needs people felt at the time — counselling services, practical assistance for people living on the street, and a think tank on social and political issues that published papers and offered speakers to address a wide range of topics.

Over his 24-year incumbency at St Hilary's he developed a network model for the parish, based on demographically-focused congregations meeting at different times of the day, and small groups that provided pastoral grounding. With this came the necessity to train and equip people to be effective leaders within the network, and to assemble a large team that could steward worship and common life. Two chapters of this book address these issues. Steve Webster gives a very detailed account of the process and thinking behind Peter's development of the pastoral model, and the ways in which this required him to grow and change as a pastor and community leader. Karl Faase describes his own process of formation as a leader through Peter's mentoring, outlining the theological and personal questions that resonate through his own ministry. These discussions affirm the interweaving of the pastoral and evangelistic strands for fruitful parish ministry.

The place of women in the church was the big issue in Anglicanism during Peter's years of ministry at St Hilary's. The book speaks in many ways about the team ministry between Peter and Merrill, and Merrill's own widely varied forms of ministry. In

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some ways the book would have been stronger with a chapter or two directly addressing Merrill's own distinctive ministry. Tracey Lauersen's chapter, *Women Who Lead and Preach*, explores Peter's cultural formation, his approach to scripture, and explores the ways he fostered and nurtured the gifts and ministries of women in his parish and in the wider denomination in pursuit of a church where 'equality, partnership and mutual respect' (p 79) would be the grounding of Christian ministry.

Lauersen's description of Peter's "'meta-theological" approach' to these issues is very rich account of developing hermeneutics to address complex issues so that a change of mind can be grounded on a full testimony of Biblical witness. Peter's method represents an approach that is still urgently needed in view of the difficulty of properly appreciating and drawing on the gifts of women, along with people marginalised on other grounds, in the Church. We can all learn from him.

Paul Perini's essay, *Following on from a Great One*, offers some commendable insights into the most important phase of any ministry of leadership, where the pulpit stands vacant while a new leader is sought. In many communities there is an urgency to appoint as swiftly as possible, and Perini speaks to how this can shape the ministry of the successor.

He notes that the wait between Peter's retirement and his own arrival was eight weeks, surely a land-speed record in clergy appointments, and he feels in retrospect that 'a well-planned and significantly longer interregnum would have been helpful for the succession that had to take place.' (p 22) Too often the urgency to appoint trumps the needs of a community to pass through the phases of loss and grief, and reconstruction, in order to be able to welcome and support a new ministry.

This book is a great tribute to Peter Corney's long ministry at St Hilary's. It describes how he remained fresh through his long engagement with one place. Anyone looking for models of flourishing over the long run of leadership in Christian community, and how to do it by calling others to join in the work, will find this a valuable book that will repay careful study.

Kieran Crichton

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Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Models of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 208 pages.

Models of Evangelism offers the reader a distilled and synthesised study of eight historical and contemporary modes of evangelism. These approaches include Personal, Small group, Visitation, Liturgical, Church growth, Prophetic, Revival and Media. Beginning with models that require a more personalised approach, and progressing to those with the greatest possible reach, Pope-Levison has selected modes that have an established longevity, a substantive historical record, and a variety of exemplars.

This book is both informative and instructional; born out of Pope-Levison's twenty years of student interaction when teaching Introduction to Evangelism to graduates, and interest as a historian. Subsequently, each chapter includes a biblical analysis, theological reflection, historical survey, and a practical implementation guide. Book-ended by stimulating anecdotes and personal appraisals as to the efficacy of each particular approach, *Models of Evangelism* carries the overall feel of an educational textbook and "how-to" working manual. Her hope for the project is that each distinctive approach may ultimately morph in the mind of the reader such that they will "combust to create a model uniquely suited to each particular context" (p.9).

Two notable strengths include the sheer breadth of evangelistic diversity and Pope-Levison's thoughtful theological reflections. Combined, they helpfully serve to expand the reader's evangelistic vision whilst stimulating contextualised application. For the newly initiated to the Christian faith, *Models of Evangelism* offers a welcome grounding by which they may evaluate their own conversion experience within a broader historical and ecclesiastical landscape. And for the leader seeking to raise the evangelistic temperature of their local church, it offers a framework by which they may assess the utility of past approaches and the prospect for future projects.

Whilst Pope-Levison works hard to reach beyond her immediate North American purview by including exemplars beyond evangelical Protestantism; the overall weighting and statistical analysis drawn from her immediate cultural context give *Models of Evangelism* an ethnocentric feel. And although not prohibitive, the outside reader will need to be aware of this cultural lens.

Further, *Models of Evangelism* does not offer an analysis, per se, of the nature of the gospel. However, that is not the stated aim of Pope-Levison's project. Consequently,

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the gospel is more presumed rather than appraised. That said, her chapter on prophetic evangelism offers a more thorough-going and useful exposition regarding the gospel of the kingdom. Those readers seeking to find a language and methodology that speaks into a post-Christian culture will find this section particularly rewarding. Pope-Levison argues that far from shying "away from denouncing individual sins," prophetic evangelists "underscore that the whole gospel demands a denunciation of structural sin, such as racism, sexism, economic exploitation, and a capitulation to structures that serve the status quo" (p.126). Here lies Pope-Levison's most spirited appraisal. Many will resonate with her full-orbed assessment: "The heartbeat of prophetic evangelism is an all-out effort to be holistic in scope" (p.129).

Lastly, Pope-Levison concludes with a pertinent question: "But what makes evangelism good?" (p.181). In response, she draws the reader's attention to five qualities that seem to contribute to the effectiveness of each model. These aspects include hospitality, relationship, integrity, message bearing and church rootedness.

In an age where many Christians are either disquieted by the 'e' word or inclined to practice a self-styled faith in isolation, she contends that the local church must see itself as the evangelist (p.190), one that embodies the message by being grounded in the practice of hospitality, relational proximity and moral integrity. She remarks that only when these dimensions are present, will the church "become a compass for a disoriented world" (p.190).

Beyond a mere synthesis of historical methodologies, Models of Evangelism offers the reader a suite of tools by which they may analyse, assess and enact contextualised forms of evangelism. Whilst the book will not furnish the reader with the gift of evangelism, it will further expand and equip the evangelist or evangelistically minded church to embrace with fresh eyes the call of Jesus Christ to make everyone a disciple of his kingdom.

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Kees de Groot, *The Liquidation of the Church* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 192 pages.

This book addresses the big question of what is happening to religion in the contemporary Western world. While the illustrations in this book are confined to the Netherlands and the major focus of the book is on Catholicism, the ideas and forms of description have much wider applicability throughout the Western world, and beyond. I was surprised by the extent to which I saw parallels to most of his descriptions in Australia. The book is primarily a sociological analysis of what is happening to the churches and will be of great interest to academics and practitioners who are trying to make sense of the present church decline and the emergence of new forms of ministry, such as spiritual centres and chaplaincy. De Groot argues against the popular secularisation narrative of western religious decline. Instead he offers an alternative metaphor of 'liquid religious communities' drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, in which religion does not disappear but its resources appear in many other forms.

The book is divided into three major sections. In the first, de Groot describes what is happening as religious institutions look for ways of expressing themselves in 'liquid modernity'. He notes how local churches try to be accessible to the wider public but are faced with the dilemma as to whether they cease to be 'membership' oriented developing activities primarily for their members, or whether they become consumer-oriented service organisations offering a wide-range of programs and services which are 'sold' to the wider public. He describes how these dilemmas have become more acute in mega-churches and also in events such as the Catholic World Youth Day which use marketing techniques to 'sell' their programs and services in such a way that each gathering becomes a 'special event'.

The second section explores attempts of the churches to develop patterns of ministry within the secular world: through broadcast church services, spiritual centres and chaplaincy. In each case, he notes the tensions between being rooted in the institutional churches and serving the wider public. In each case, the churches have lost some control. Indeed, he notes that many chaplains have become 'spiritual counsellors' who legitimize their professions by integrating their work with the process of care.

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The third section explores the use of religion in the secular sphere. De Groot tells the story of how mental health care was initiated by the churches. However, over time, it has merged with psychiatric initiatives. Over time, the Christian faith disappeared from the frame of reference and the churches lost all control of these forms of care.

An example is that of the exposition of religion in a museum which focused on what the citizens believed. The museum organized interviews, inter-faith dialogues, and displays of personal symbols of faith. In doing so, the museum portrayed how religion had become a personal choice and personally shaped, sometimes at odds with religious institutions.

Further examples were plays in the theatre where religious symbols, metaphors, stories and forms of liturgy were used. Sometimes the plays critiqued these religious resources or used them for non-religious purposes such as a play with took practices and symbols of the Last Supper and used them to stage a meal about environmental causes. In these ways, de Groot argues that, contrary to the narrative of secularization, religious elements are being disembedded from the origins in the churches and re-embedded in other spheres of life.

This is an important book and provides a pertinent challenge to the pervasive story of secularization. He poses well the dilemmas facing both local churches and other forms of Christian ministry. De Groot himself writes partly as a sociologist, but also as a practical theologian, concerned for the future of the Church. So the book deserves to be read by academics but also by practitioners. While de Groot makes many academic references, and writes in a careful style, detailing the evidence he has gathered for each point, the book is also very accessible. Someone without any background in sociology would find this book helpful, in making sense of the changes in the expressions of faith that are occurring around us, but also challenging, in terms of finding ways through the cultural changes. The book may well help practitioners to think through what it means to be a local church, and how best to engage in chaplaincy, and what are some of the potential challenges of putting services on-line, for example.

One of the ambiguities in the book is that de Groot moves between the metaphors of liquifying and liquidating. However the process is described, de Groot hopes that the Church may discover its essence: what it is meant to be. De Groot describes this as the development of a 'self-disinterested, radical mission-shaped Church' serving the

world, even though the forms of church as we currently know them may well disappear.

I am not sure that de Groot has a strong basis for such optimism. However, the book itself may go just some way in prompting us to look again at our various forms of ministry so that churches and all who serve in ministry may be better equipped to minister to a changing society.

Philip Hughes.

Research Fellow (Alphacrucis College)

Irene Alexander and Charles Ringma, eds, *Pub Theology: Where Potato Wedges and a Beer are a Eucharistic Experience* (Manchester, UK: Piquant Editions, 2021), 274 pages.

The days are over when people took their clues about the interpretation of their faith from great volumes of systematic theology which were designed to be universally valid. We recognise today the task of making sense of faith, the task of theology, is a task for everyone and a task that has to be done in context. It is a task that lies at the centre of every kind of ministry. This is a challenge because we often silo our thoughts: keeping theology for Sunday mornings, quite distinct from what we do on Saturday nights, or, for that matter, what we do Monday to Friday. In each sphere of life, we have our own language and our own thoughts, and they do not readily mix.

This book is theology in context. It is born out of personal narratives, told originally in a conversational style as talks in a pub in Brisbane. They seek to overcome the silos and see life in a holistic way. The book is divided into four sections. The first section is about longing and belonging. It deals with the experiences of migration, with living in two locations, and in having a sense of homelessness as a result of many movements across nations, cultures and languages.

The second part is entitled 'Reflections on Being Human'. Eight chapters deal with different personal experiences: a sense of weakness, divine direction, anger, marriage and divorce, self-righteousness, forgiveness, disability and issues of mental health.

The third part is about vocation. Beginning with a strong affirmation that all (or most) vocations are of equal value within the story of creation, chapters explore personal experiences within specific vocations and how these experiences relate to faith. "De-

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forming' experiences are worthy of reflection. The doctor in paediatric palliative care grapples with the age-old issues of theodicy: innocent suffering and a loving God. Other chapters deal with unemployment and laughter and how a prison chaplain has seen God change lives and systems.

The fourth section is on mission and community, mostly dealing with experiences of living alongside and providing assistance to people who have been marginalised from society. These experiences raise critical questions of the pursuit of economic security and upward social mobility. Another chapter explores what it means to be a neighbour to those who have been marginalised. The final chapter of the book argues for a spirituality not of silence, but of speaking out about injustice and suffering.

In each of the chapters, there is a strong sense of authenticity as the authors tell their story. Perhaps the 'pub theme' is reflected in the ways they expose themselves and make themselves vulnerable. Yet, it provides an authenticity which is a strong ground for relating to the traditions of faith. The stories certainly show the great variety of human experiences and frequently the messiness of life. A real strength of this book is that it does not hide from painful childhood experiences, anger and divorce, from mental and physical suffering, from experiences of homelessness and redundancy, nor from the costs of living with and loving people on the margins of society. Everyone will find many experiences in this book which will resonate deeply.

These stories of life experience are complemented by reflections on the Christian faith as it has informed or transformed their lives. Most of the authors are not theologians, and there is nothing systematic about these reflections. Yet, their experiences give their musings a profound sense of reality and provoke theological reflection as books about theology rarely do. How can the biblical teaching about the dangers of wealth and the Australian preoccupation with economic security be lived in today's world, for example? We may not feel ready to take the road taken by several of these authors, but they do provide some real theological challenges.

There are several great challenges in such an exercise in 'pub narrative theology'. One is keeping true to the traditions of faith. There were occasions in the book where I felt that the great themes of the fall, sin, salvation, and the issues of hermeneutics were glossed over in ways which did not do justice to the biblical text or subsequent theological reflection. Occasionally there was some 'proof-texting' which failed to consider the context of the quoted biblical texts.

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Throughout the ages, human beings have drawn God in their own image. They have found the nature of God within their own experiences. We have anthropomorphised God. God has been conceived as a divinised form of our own cultural ideals, partly because the language of our culture forces that upon us. There were times when reading this book that I felt the authors were falling into this trap. They were drawing God in the image of their own experiences. The strength of Christian communities which exist over time, of biblical documents that were written in another culture from our own, and of a book like this, which brings together diverse personal experiences and expressions of faith, is that there is the potential for correcting our lenses as we are faced with counter-cultural images and ideals.

This is a book for all people in ministry: for all who are helping people to make sense of the faith in their lives, whether that be in preaching, education, or pastoral counselling, for example. It is also a highly readable book for all Christians reflecting on life and faith. It will help us all to do theology in context: overcoming the silos of faith and the realities of everyday life. Readers of this book who reflect on these stories and expressions of faith will find resonances with their own experiences and they may well find their own images of God challenged.

Philip Hughes.

Research Fellow (Alphacrucis College)

Daryl Potts, *As For Me and My House: Keys to a Flourishing Family and a Fulfilled Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 215 pages.

One of the most pressing issues for clergy (of both genders) is how to be successful in ministry (whatever that means) without losing your family or your marriage. Too many ministers, their partners or their children walk away from ministry, church, family, and even faith as a result of negative experiences in church life. This happens in churches of all denominations and is belatedly becoming the subject of social research. Daryl Potts is an experienced minister within the Pentecostal Australian Christian Churches (ACC, formerly Assemblies of God in Australia) denomination who has served as a youth minister, pastoral team member, senior minister and regional leader over three decades. At the same time his marriage has flourished and he and his wife brought up three children, all of whom are still active Christians. For these reasons alone, he has the right to speak into this issue. But also, this book is grounded in Potts' doctoral

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research during which he interviewed many ACC ministers and their spouses about their experience of balancing ministry and family. That makes this book unique and relevant.

The author explains how he went about doing this research, the theological ideas and social science underpinning it, the previous research into this topic and the findings he came up with. These are summed up in the heading “The Triple ‘A’ Model of Ministry Function and Family Fulfillment.” The three A’s are Aspiration, Awareness and Attention. Potts argues that ministers who have a solid aspiration for their family as well as their ministry, who are aware of the positive and negative experiences ministers and their families face, and who focus on building the positives and minimising or managing the negatives have the best chance of fulfillment in ministry and family life.

Potts draws on other authors who have studied clergy life in Australia and America as well as his own research. This gives everything in this book significant depth and credibility. After an introduction that explains the research project and its underlying assumptions, the three A’s are tackled in turn, followed by a short conclusion and a useful bibliography. Each section contains between two and five chapters that explore aspects of the “A” under consideration. For example, the section on Awareness contains chapters on The Blessings of the Ministry/Family Journey, Ministry-Related Burdens, Family-Related Burdens, The Ministry Couple and The Minister’s Children. Each chapter finishes with a summary, a list of key points covered and suggestions for personal reflection. This makes it easier for readers to find their way around and review what they are learning.

While some of the results of this research may seem obvious, such as the need to give priority to marriage and family over work (in this case, church ministry), such principles are still often ignored. Potts divides his participants broadly into two groups: those who feel positive about their children’s embrace of Christian faith and the church and those whose children have departed from either or both. The conclusion seems to be that ministers and their partners who gave attention to the key issues exposed in the book were more likely to have children who continued to follow the Lord and serve in the church in some capacity.

However, not all the conclusions that emerged from Potts’ research are obvious. One that surprised me was emphasising the positive benefits of being in the ministry for

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the minister's partner and children. The family benefits from exposure to significant visiting ministers who come to their church or who they experience at conferences. They also enjoy the benefits of the flexible hours and holiday times the minister enjoys as compared to other occupations. Ministers who focus on these and other benefits with their families can help them embrace a positive view of ministry and church. However, these benefits do not entirely outweigh the stresses caused by long hours, congregational demands, lack of privacy, financial shortages and other challenges.

This book is a great source of wisdom for new and more experienced ministers. For example, the experienced participants in Potts' study were asked how they would advise a new couple stepping out into ministry and their answers fill the last chapter, covering areas such as prioritising the family, including them in the ministry journey, protecting them from negative church issues, setting up a solid financial structure early on, staying authentic as a person and others.

The book is somewhat repetitive: certain quotes from the participants or other sources are often repeated in several chapters, perhaps because the triple A model is a slightly artificial way of organizing the material. Also the book does not suggest any way that pastors can retrieve what they may have lost through their own false priorities, obsession with ministry success or absence from their children. But these are small flaws; this is a valuable resource that every ministry couple should read carefully and thoughtfully with a view to learning from the wise counsel contained in it.

Jon K. Newton

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Jeremy Riddle, *The Reset: Returning to the Heart of Worship and a Life of Undivided Devotion* (Anaheim, CA: Wholehearted Publishing, 2020), 134 pages.

Having heard Jeremy Riddle many times over the past 10 years, I knew that any book written by him would be insightful, passionate and intense. This book is certainly all of those things! It's a timely book and the more I talk to people about it, I realise that it's not just timely for me, but timely for so many. Even the portions of the book that may not feel as applicable to you personally will, I believe, make you think and ask yourself the question "how does this apply to me?"

The Reset explains that it is not simply a book on worship, but "an appeal to the broader worshipping community to once again re-order their lives and practices in accordance with the sacred and priestly calling they were given and zealously return to the heart of worship."

This has been one of the most powerful and thought-provoking messages that I have encountered for many years. I read it three times in a week. It was a sword and balm to my heart. It made me cry and repent. It challenged me and encouraged me. It has spurred me on and excited my heart. I wholeheartedly recommend this book for anyone following Jesus who has let stuff creep in between their heart and His. I didn't know it, but my heart needed a reset; a recalibration back to pure worship.

Riddle is known best for his worship albums and roles leading corporate worship at Bethel and Anaheim Vineyard. Although written from the perspective of a very influential American worship leader, there is so much of what Jeremy writes that speaks to people in very different contexts. What I really appreciated about this book is that it is clearly written with a deep love and desire for purity in the local and global Church. In the midst of a passionate cry to the Church, worshippers, and worship leaders to reset their hearts back to a pursuit of God, Jeremy doesn't spew bitterness and simply bash the Church. Instead, he consistently fills this book with a message of hope and inspires the reader that pure worship is where we find purpose and our hearts find a home.

As much as I was led on one hand to repent for what I had made worship in my own life, I was equally as inspired on the other hand about the future for my own worship

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life and my role as a worship leader. I have been reminded of the call back to the heart of worship – that it's all about Jesus.

This is a constructive book that will firstly deconstruct some of the paradigms that we may have made of worship in a personal and public setting. Secondly, it will then help you go on a journey of rebuilding your framework of what is truly God-honouring and how to worship God in both Spirit and in truth. It is ideal for worship leaders and very helpful for pastors as a whole. However, I believe that it will also speak to the heart of all readers in some way and it will leave them with a personal desire for purity and a passion for public revival. Take this moment to recognise that He is calling you to something greater, something deeper, something transformational.

Mark Dean

Worship Pastor (Gateway Baptist Church)