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A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership
Volume 7 • Number 1 • WINTER 1998

I believe a local church exists to do corporately what each Christian believer should be doing individually—and that is to worship God. It is to show forth the excellencies of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. It is to reflect the glories of Christ ever shining upon us through the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

—A. W. TOZER

The glory of the gospel is that when the church is absolutely different from the world she invariably attracts it.

—D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

BOOK REVIEWS

REACHING OUT WITHOUT DUMBING DOWN

Marva Dawn

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans (1995).

316 pages, paper, \$16.99.

Most books have fans and detractors, and in most cases the fans share some monolithic characteristic while the detractors display the opposite. The fans and detractors of Marva Dawn's *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, however, make for odd bedfellows. She has been equally blasted by hard-core confessional Lutherans and by a review in *Worship Leader Magazine*, a Trojan horse slipping untold quantities of commercial Christian music past the unwitting protectors of the purity and peace of the church. In all, it's a dubious distinction she holds. That ruckus alone ought to make one pay attention to this book.

Marva Dawn earned an undergraduate degree in church music from Concordia College in River Forest, Illinois. The school is one of several Concordias sprinkled around the country that were originally designed to prepare parochial school teachers, church musicians, and preseminary students for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This undergraduate education was to provide the seedbed for an idea that has driven Dawn's activities to this day. In her post-college years, she became more and more convinced that what one is and does comes from how one worships. Furthermore, she recognized that the musical life of a congregation had a direct bearing on that worship, and that many (per-

haps most) pastors had little understanding of this condition. This interest in the relationship between gathered worship and personal piety led her to a full-blown study of ethics, and she eventually received a Ph.D. from Notre Dame in ethics with a specialty in the works of Jacques Ellul.

Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down is a long meditation on the relationship between corporate worship and ethics. The very title itself is a dialectic concerning the nature of evangelism, and evangelism (the proclamation of the gospel) must happen in gathered worship. It's one of those rare books that has spoken volumes before the reader opens to page one. Not surprisingly, some are put off by this book merely because of the title, precisely because their method is to dumb down, and they know it! Others are troubled by the cultural concessions Marva Dawn makes, precisely because they are seen not as cultural concessions but as theological concessions.

As a reviewer, I ought to take a position. Yet I am curiously constrained not to do so because I agree with Dawn's basic premise, regardless of how I perceive her position on the relationship between theology and specific cultural objects. She is fundamentally right: What we are and do comes from what we believe occurs in the regular assembly of the saints, and how those beliefs are expressed in the various actions. Furthermore, she uses language about cultural objects so idiosyncratically that any would-be detractor must pause first to be certain he has really understood her. For example, she talks about introducing her choir to a wide diversity of styles of music (p. 203). On first blush, one might be tempted to see this as a garden-variety appearance of blended-service, post-modern relativism. Yet she goes on to say what those styles are: canons, contrapuntal, chorale elaborations, quodlibets, responsory chants (p. 203). She is speaking of a diversity of styles as a diversity of musical/architectural principles (though there are other portions

of the book where the more usual language of style diversity appears). How refreshing! In an age of gross musical ignorance, the vast majority of style discussion treats only the musical wrapper, the surface elements, or worse, and most commonly, the visceral responses of the hearers. Well, of course the visceral response of the hearer tells nothing about the music any more than saying, "I don't like the buttons on the pastor's suit coat," tells anything about the sermon!

Rather than encapsulating the essence of the book, I would rather interest the reader with a handful of excerpts. To be sure, my own excerpting is riddled with editorial bias. Still, the tenor of the book should emerge.

When we agree that God must be the subject and object of our worship, we discover that the bitter war between "traditional" and "contemporary" styles misses the real issue. Both can easily become idolatrous. Many defenders of traditional worship proudly insist that the historic liturgy of the church is the only way to do it right, while their counterparts advocating contemporary worship styles often try to control God and convert people by their own efforts. Neither pride nor presumption can inhabit praise; both prevent God from being the subject and object of our worship (p. 93).

The difficulty for churches is to find worship practices that invite boomers to experience the truth of God without the self-absorption that distorts it. How can we convey God's revelation to those who regard their own self-discovered experiences as superior to truths handed down by the creeds of the church (p. 113)?

What is faulty is churches' assumption that if we choose the right kind of music people will be attracted to Christ. It is idolatry to think our work makes the difference Worship music is used to proclaim Christ, not to advertise Him (p. 192).

Lacking genuine intimacy, many people are desperate to experience real life but don't know how to go about it. They have not learned to appreciate the intricacies of symphonic

or chamber music, the profundity of genuine works of art, the complexity of classical literature, dramatic mysteries, poetic sublimities, simple and deep delights in nature, scientific wonders, the careful workmanship of crafts, the discipline of playing an instrument, the exquisite pleasure of learning (p. 48).

If the church's worship is faithful, it will eventually be subversive of the culture surrounding it, for God's truth transforms the lives of those nurtured by it (p. 57).

I hope churches will continually utilize fresh words and music to praise God, but it worries me that so many new compositions dumb down our perception, knowledge, and adoration of God. A principal cause of such dumbing down is the contemporary confusion of praise with happiness. Some worship planners and participants think that to praise God is simply to sing upbeat music; consequently, many songs that are called praise actually describe the feelings of the believer rather than the character of God (p. 87).

How important it is . . . to fill children's memories with hymns, songs, prayers, Scripture verses and creeds! . . . I want to emphasize this point doubly because of my own experiences with chronic illness and life-threatening crises. Last year a retinal hemorrhage in my good eye made reading barely possible for only very short periods with a double set of magnifiers. During seven months of near blindness, I thanked God constantly for my eight years at a Lutheran elementary /junior high school, during which I memorized hundreds of hymn verses and passages of the Bible. This background enables me to participate almost fully in worship even when I cannot see the words. In times when I have been near to death, those songs and texts have flooded my brain and brought enormous comfort and strength. . . . In crises, old age, blindness, or other infirmities, our faith and hope continue to be nurtured by what we have stored in our memories. Let us make sure that what we put into children's memories are things of substance, pieces of the church's heritage that have stood the test of time and suffering. . . . Having observed hundreds of worship services throughout the United States, I am

troubled that in so many "contemporary" services the children are not able to participate at all. These services do not include memorized liturgical pieces every week so that the children can anticipate them and join in (pp. 120-21).

Every person (especially pastors) concerned with the music of gathered worship should read chapter 8, "Throwing the Baby Out with the Bath Water or Putting the Baby in Fresh Clothes: Music." Here the admonition to read Marva Dawn's idiosyncratic writing carefully is especially pertinent. She again asserts that the music of the congregation is integral to the formulation of the believer's character and of the Christian community. These two concerns presuppose her analysis of good and bad church music. So it is that she can boldly say: "Shallow music forms shallow people" (p. 75).

The stated purpose of the whole book is:

to reflect upon the culture for which we want to proclaim the gospel; to expose the subtle powers that beckon us into idolatries and that upset the necessary dialectical balances in the church's life and worship; to stimulate better questions about it, why, and how we might be dumbing down in the ways we structure, plan, and participate in worship education and in worship itself; and to offer better means for reaching out to people outside the church. It is my claim that we ought not to, and do not need to, conform to our culture's patterns, but that the Christian community must intentionally sustain its unique character and just as intentionally care about the culture around it in order to be able to introduce people genuinely to Christ and to nurture individuals to live faithfully (p. 11).

It is my claim that Marva Dawn accomplishes these goals admirably.

LEONARD PAYTON
Austin, Texas

BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP: AN URGENT CALL TO RESTORE BIBLICAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Alexander Strauch

Littleton, Colorado: Lewis and Roth (1995).

337 pages, paper, \$14.99.

There are horrendous pressures on churches today to conform to the worldwide, feminist spirit and its ruthless eradication of all male-female distinctions within the church. Part of the church growth movement, in its obsession with bigness and numbers, preaches giving as much power and authority as possible to one person. Multitudes of churches are oblivious to the moral and spiritual qualifications outlined in the New Testament for church shepherds. Worldly attitudes of bigness, power and self-promotion, and success in "the ministry" are deeply ingrained in the minds of too many church leaders (pp.11-12).

This outlines part of the need to restore to the church a biblically qualified leadership, as indicated in the book's subtitle. Strauch's main contention is that the New Testament always speaks of plurality of qualified male elders who lead the church. There is no hierarchy of clergy and laity, but the salaried pastor(s) and those serving at parity are on the same level. Pastor, elder, and overseer are interchangeable terms in the New Testament.

This revised version of Strauch's book is a wonderful improvement on a good idea. Even if you have a copy of the first edition you will want this update. He has enriched this revision with more extensive sources, new material, a new book structure, and the addition of helpful indices.

The book is laid out in a very straightforward manner and will be very usable by most people in your church. It is not a difficult read, and is a very clear discussion of the biblical basis for a plurality of elders, a thorough exposition of the key texts, and the practical way in which it is to be

worked out in the church. Even those who may not agree with this form of church government will have a difficult time dismissing Strauch's argument without dismissing the text of Scripture. Those who already have some form of elders may find much help and needed improvement to their present understanding.

This is the real strength of this book. It is a thorough, yet non-technical, exposition of all of the relevant texts of Scripture, with sound application along the way. He also adds weight to his argument with many voices from the past and present (many who speak from a Reformed perspective).

Strauch wrote in his introduction, "Precious truths, no doubt, still await discovery" (p. 12). The one area in which I would like to see more practical steps fleshed out is in the relationship between the resident or full-time elder(s) and the men who are not in salaried positions as elders. There could be a new chapter devoted to detailing more of this special role and its relationship with the other elders. The book is weighted more toward elders who do not devote themselves to preaching and teaching as full-time work.

It would also be helpful to have an appendix on the Brethren movement in order to distinguish Strauch's view more clearly from Brethrenism. Some might dismiss Strauch on the basis that it sounds too "Brethren."

I also recommend that Strauch's newly revised twelve-session workbook be used in conjunction with the book. This is excellent material for training men to serve well in the role of elder. I am convinced that a plurality of qualified elders is essential for a long-term healthy congregation. The longer I am in the ministry, the wisdom of this biblical approach shows itself again and again. Strauch has done a great service for the church with this work, and I pray that many will take up his "urgent call."

BOB DALBERG
Ely, Minnesota

THE CAMBUSLANG REVIVAL

Arthur Fawcett

Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth (1971).

256 pages, paper, \$12.99.

Because the early American Reformed camp had firm Scottish roots, the reformations and revivals of America have often found either a precursor or parallel events in Scotland. *The Cambuslang Revival* by Arthur Fawcett chronicles the 1742 revival in Scotland, a parallel of the American First Great Awakening. The Scottish revival came in the midst of all sorts of doctrinal upheaval. In 1707 the two kingdoms of Scotland and England were united under one crown. Five years later, attempts to further unite the two nations lead to the requirement of all ministers to take the Oath of Abjuration, swearing to "support, maintain, and defend the succession of the Crown . . . as settled by the English Parliament." Two-thirds of the Presbyterian ministers in Scotland took the oath while one-third refused. The problem was that to swear to support the crown in this way was swearing to support episcopacy, which was contrary to their convictions as Covenanters. This one-third seceded and formed the Associate Presbytery. Jumping forward thirty years or so, revival falls, not in the camp of the faithful one-third who refused to sign the Oath of Abjuration, but in the two-thirds who did sign it. This created a considerable dilemma: the church that is experiencing the blessing of a great and wonderful revival can also be attacked (and rightfully) for its compromise. Obviously, the story is not a simple one. *The Cambuslang Revival* gives a well-researched account of God's mercies in Scotland. The revival came on the heels of seventy years of faithful Scots regularly gathering to pray for their church. Although William M'Culloch was the preacher of Cambuslang, George Whitefield preached seventeen times to the congregation, speaking

one day to a crowd numbering between twenty thousand and thirty thousand. "In a letter that same day to his wife, he tells her that this far out-does all that he had ever witnessed in America: 'I am persuaded the work will spread more and more'" (p. 115). As the revival spread throughout Scotland, the Associate Presbytery became more and more critical of their evangelistic efforts. When Whitefield first came to Cambuslang he was welcomed by the Associate Presbytery and invited to preach in their church. Afterwards, however, he was instructed to preach only for them. "The reason for this was that they 'were the Lord's people.'" To this Whitefield replied that perhaps the Lord had other people too and, in any case, "the devil's people needed him most of all" (p. 184). A seceder's comment later made clear their sentiment against the revival: "I will not believe any good fruits follow the Ministry of such men as Whitefield, M'Culloch and M'Laurin and others, tho' one that had been in the third heavens would say so" (p. 195).

The conclusion of the book describes the Associate Presbytery sinking into an isolationistic Calvinism. M'Culloch's church, however, becomes the breeding ground for a revival that spreads throughout Scotland and begins many overseas missionary movements. Unfortunately, within this evangelistic movement, the importance of a biblical church government has been watered down. Many of these missionary societies that were a result of this revival form the precursor to the parachurch organizations so prevalent today.

Fawcett has done an excellent job of researching this subject. The book is packed with quotes from journals and obscure periodicals published during the revival. Because the book is so research oriented, there is very little of the author's opinion, and readers are left to do their own exegesis and make their own applications. I recommend the reader to first have at least an introductory understanding of Scottish church history before tackling the book. The

dilemma, however, of the debate between biblical church government and the communion of the saints is such a relevant issue today, that it behooves us to learn from incidents surrounding the revival at Cambuslang; this book is an excellent record of those events.

BEN MERKLE
Moscow, Idaho

**PRINCETON SEMINARY: THE MAJESTIC TESTIMONY,
1869–1929**

David B. Calhoun
Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth (1996).
560 pages, cloth, \$29.99.

Everyone enjoys reading a good story. Even when you know in advance how the plot unfolds and what will happen to the main characters in the final chapter, a well-written book has an inherent power to grip its reader and to keep him interested.

Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony 1869–1929 is just such a book. It is the second of a two-volume work on the history of Princeton Theological Seminary from its founding in 1812 to its reorganization in 1929. Authored by Dr. David B. Calhoun, professor of church history at Covenant Theological Seminary, this eagerly awaited concluding volume is the stirring account of the ministry and influence of Princeton Seminary from 1869 to 1929.

Volume Two continues the story of the work of grace the Lord Jesus Christ was doing in the establishment of the seminary and in the lives of professors and students. As an author, Calhoun excels in the spiritual portraits he provides of leading faculty. Professors Charles and A. A. Hodge, William H. Green, Geerhardus Vos, B. B. Warfield, and J. Gresham Machen are among a host of men whose Christian

convictions and scholarly achievements are highlighted. Warfield and Machen both receive a great deal of attention as they were transitional figures who attempted to stem the tide of modernism and unbelief in the Presbyterian denomination and the erosion of the doctrinal foundations at the seminary. Living in an age more interested in subjective experience than doctrinal objectivity (sound familiar?), both were outspoken critics of the presuppositions underlying the historical-critical method of biblical research, rooted, as they rightly recognized, in a posture of unbelief.

As Calhoun ably shows, the spiritual convictions of the faculty who stood for the Word of God in its authority and trustworthiness is the source which gave rise to their academic commitments and accomplishments. For the Princetonians, piety and learning were to be kept together; scholarship and spirituality were not juxtaposed against each other. While critical of "critical scholarship" that was biased in its approach to the study of Scripture, they were, in the words of W. H. Green, professor of Old Testament, committed to a "believing criticism" in their appropriation of scholarly research in ascertaining the meaning of Scripture and orthodox theology.

It is truly remarkable to see the depth of spirituality that existed in the lives of so many of these professors. Theirs was truly a vision of the church militant and the church triumphant. Being spiritually minded men, scholarship was not an end itself; it served the purpose of forming Christian character, of promoting orthodoxy, and defending the Word of God from its detractors.

With such men of the spiritual and scholarly stature as Warfield and Machen, one might expect that the seminary would have remained strong and spiritually uncompromised. But the story is otherwise. So what happened to bring about what many regard as an institutional downfall in 1929?

Calhoun provides a useful analysis of the men and movements interwoven throughout these six decades of the seminary's life that resulted in the reorganization of the board of directors in 1929 and capitulation to Protestant modernism. Sadly, even the faculty were seriously divided in their discussion regarding doctrinal inclusiveness or exclusiveness within the seminary, denomination, and interaction with other theological positions and movements.

At stake was the very message of the gospel and the purity of the visible church. "Institutional Churchianity" had replaced genuine biblical Christianity. What remained was a compromised orthodoxy and orthopraxy that Machen clearly identified as "another religion" going under the guise of Christianity. Likewise, the third "mark" of the church as understood by the Protestant Reformers—discipline—was disregarded and all but abandoned. There was more interest in preserving peace than purity; toleration than truth.

Happily, the work of faithful theological education and the ministry of the church goes on even when institutions and faculty change. Indeed, Calhoun shows through the writings of the men themselves that their hope was not in men, denominations, or schools. Their hope was in the living God, whose they were and whom they served. Thus, although an era of orthodoxy came to an end in 1929, they knew the faithfulness of their God in maintaining His Name and preserving His church that He promised to build.

Calhoun's two volumes are a magisterial treatment of the spiritual life and calling that characterized the community of disciples who made up Princeton Theological Seminary over the years of its history these two volumes encompass. Volume Two, like its predecessor, is edifying and insightful, well worth several rereadings! Its strength lies in its perceptive analysis of the spiritual culture that shaped the ethos of the institution. There are no other books on the history of the seminary that do this so thoroughly and thoughtfully.

Princeton Seminary: The Majestic Testimony 1869–1929 is an excellent guide to the men and movements that have shaped American Presbyterianism and the landscape of American Christianity. It contains a wealth of helpful spiritual insight and challenge to Christians of today's generation who must make a choice for truth in a time of doctrinal deterioration and the supremacy of the subjective. May we learn from the past that we might stand for the truth in the present!

JAMES M. GARRETSON
Glendale, California

THE CHURCH

Edmund P. Clowney
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity (1995).
336 pages, paper, \$15.99.

Clowney's book, *The Church*, is part of a series edited by Gerald Bray. In order to understand Clowney's particular purpose and approach it is best to understand the aims of the series in general. In the series preface Bray says that this series "covers the main themes of Christian doctrine . . . in a way which complements the traditional textbooks but does not copy them. The series aims, however, not merely to answer current objections to evangelical Christianity, but also to rework the orthodox evangelical position in a fresh and compelling way. The overall thrust is therefore positive and evangelistic in the best sense."

Clowney has met the aims of the series by being both theologically astute and pastorally warm and inviting in his writing. Nearly every chapter begins with a scene from our contemporary landscape that is woven throughout the chapter if not in a specific way at least in a thematic way. It is evident that Clowney's desire is to see the theology of the

church revisited with a fresh and contemporary perspective, yet thoroughly biblical in its attempts and interpretations.

In the opening chapter, Clowney gives an overview of the doctrine of the church in light of current ideologies (e.g., pluralism). Chapters 2–5 consider the biblical theology of the church as the people of God, as the disciples of Christ, and as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the church as apostolic, one, holy and catholic. Chapter 8 looks at the “marks” of the church. The next three chapters discuss the ministry of the church: its worship, nurture, and mission. The mission of the church leads Clowney to the church’s relationship to the world (chap. 12) and to its government (chap. 13). Chapter 14 reviews the offices of the church. The currently debated topics, the ministry of women in the church (chap. 15), the charismatic gifts of tongues (chap. 16) and prophecy (chap. 17), are scrutinized through the lens of the Scripture. Then Clowney ends on the place of sacraments in the church in chapter 18. Throughout the brief yet cogent chapters, Clowney remains true to the Scripture and to the series aims of being fresh.

Clowney makes it clear at the outset that in studying the doctrine of the church from Scripture, it must remain central that it is Christ and not the church that is preeminent. Therefore, the weight Clowney puts on the written and Living Word cannot be stressed enough. “To be sure, if the church rather than Christ becomes the center of our devotion, spiritual decay has begun. A doctrine of the church that does not center on Christ is self-defeating and false” (p. 15). The reason for this emphasis is that the good news is Christ joining us to Himself and to one another as the new people of God. Therefore, to talk of the people of God, the church, without an emphasis on Christ and His mission for the church as revealed in Scripture, is to humanize the divine institution and substitute man-cen-

tered pragmatics for God-centered principles.

Perhaps what Clowney does best is give a clear, yet concise theology of the church without the technical jargon that often accompanies treatments of various doctrines. For example, in dealing with the resurrection of Christ he says, “The bombs of Hiroshima haunt us with the specter of desecrating power. But the power released at the resurrection was a life-giving power, that mushroomed out all over the world” (pp. 50–52). This style of writing is seen throughout his book and helps to make connections otherwise overlooked by the reader.

While most evangelical denominational seminaries would be quite comfortable with this book as a textbook (and this reviewer would highly recommend it), traditional dispensationalists will have trouble with Clowney’s perspective in chapter 3. Here, Clowney represents the Reformed perspective on ecclesiology: The church is spiritual Israel, and the former is no longer a separate entity, but takes into it the church, the new people of God. In the same chapter, the author deals with Peter as the rock to which Christ spoke as recorded in Matthew 16. He infers that Peter as the rock is the only acceptable interpretation (of the two that he mentions). This may not be well received by many who take it as referring to the whole group that stood with Peter. However, this is a very small issue in an excellent resource for the study of the church.

Another issue that is not given the kind of detail that it currently warrants on the religious scene today, is that of infant baptism. While Clowney does, from the reviewer’s perspective, give a very clear description of how infant baptism theologically plays a significant role in God’s economy for the church, it probably will not evince the same kind of passion for reforming or reordering the church as will other important issues he raises. Needless to say, for the brevity of the section, Clowney clearly sets before his

readers a convincing argument to those who otherwise would not embrace or even read on this subject.

Chapters 15–17 will interest those in the pastorate who are wrestling with the issues of women's roles in the church and home, as well as some of the many facets of the Pentecostal phenomena. While one may not land precisely where Clowney does, there is no doubt that they will appreciate his helpful exegesis and readable style.

This reviewer heartily recommends this book to those who desire a biblical and usable reference tool for the doctrine of the church.

GARY VET
St. Charles, Illinois

***THE FABRIC OF FAITHFULNESS: WEAVING TOGETHER
BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR DURING THE UNIVERSITY YEARS***

Steven Garber

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1996).

178 pages, paper, \$12.99.

The title of Steven Garber's new book is a good title—unlike some that keep you guessing, this one captures what the book is about—but the title might also suggest that most of us can skip it. Time is limited, we have far too much to read anyway, so we'll leave it to the college ministers and educators to read. But that would be a mistake—and a bad mistake at that. *The Fabric of Faithfulness* is about nurturing integrity, about loving God with heart and mind and strength, about what it means to minister so that the people of God will both believe the gospel and apply it across all their life.

"It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless," David Wells says in *God in the Wasteland*.

"He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticed." If God's inconsequentiality applied only to rank pagans it would be grievous, but in some measure, at least, somewhat understandable—they are pagans, after all. But Wells' indictment isn't primarily addressed to pagans, but to evangelicals, and God's weightlessness in our midst is sadly reflected in worship and lives that can only be described as lite. And preventing lite lives—lives in which belief and behavior become increasingly disconnected, and where faithfulness is slowly leached away—is the burden that Garber addresses with a wisdom born of much experience, reflection, prayer, and study, and a profound conviction that Jesus Christ is truly Lord of all.

I can make this assertion, not just because I have read his book, but because I have known Steven Garber for two decades. Through all the years of friendship in a fallen world, this much has been constant: it's hard to spend time with him and remain neutral concerning Jesus Christ. I don't recommend *The Fabric of Faithfulness* because Steve is my friend; I recommend it because my friend has something vital to say to the evangelical community.

Steve has a passion for students, and has lived out his calling to the university world, first on the staff of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, then as a campus minister with the Coalition for Christian Outreach in Pittsburgh, and now on the faculty of the American Studies Program in Washington, D.C. *The Fabric of Faithfulness* was not conceived in a comfortable armchair, it was born out of a life spent loving students for the sake of the gospel. Over the years Dr. Garber has watched as some Christian students have gone on to forge lives of faithfulness under Christ's lordship, while others have settled for a privatized faith, or for no apparent faith at all. *The Fabric of Faithfulness* has come out of this rich ministry, and the stories of some of those students are told as he explores what, by God's grace,

made the difference in their lives.

Dr. Garber writes:

I am chilled in my soul, as I remember these people whom I have loved, prayed with and played with, who have read "the right books" but no longer believe them to be true to the way the world is. How are we to understand this phenomenon, that some make the connection between belief and behavior in a way that is sustained and some do not? What is it that happens when a person, moving from student years into adulthood, continues to construct a coherent life? How does a worldview become a way of life? How do students learn to connect presuppositions with practice—belief about the world with life in the world—in the most personal areas and the most public arenas?

Those are the questions the author addresses in *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, and though it's true that the crucial college years are his primary focus, this thoughtful book will be stimulating to everyone in ministry who desires to nurture faithfulness in the people of God. But let me be more specific, and list a few reasons why church leaders need to make Steven Garber's book a part of their "must read" booklist.

First, *The Fabric of Faithfulness* will help you make sense of American culture. Most of us recognize that we seem to be living at a time of transition: modernism is giving way to postmodernism—whatever that means. And that's where Garber's book will help. In order to explore how to nurture faithfulness in our age, he must first identify the spirit of the age, and his understanding is helpful, particularly since his perspective is that of ministry. *The Fabric of Faithfulness* may not have been written primarily to be a window of insight into postmodern culture, but as a window of insight it serves admirably.

Second, the book contains wise counsel for parents, pastors, and educators who are called of God to prepare

young people for their university years, or to minister to them in the midst of those critical years. It's never been easy to maintain faithfulness as part of a remnant, when most of one's friends, colleagues, and coworkers do not share our deepest convictions, but

the conditions of modern consciousness, especially as they manifest in the modern university, make it increasingly difficult for young people to come through those years with the habits of heart required to develop and sustain . . . a vision of integrity which coherently connects belief to behavior personally as well as publicly.

Third, few teachers borrow as creatively and widely from their students' culture as Steven Garber does. *The Fabric of Faithfulness* is a stimulating illustration of what it means to "plunder the Egyptians." We all know that we must bring the truth of Scripture into tension with daily life and the wider culture, and those of us who try to do so know how difficult a task that is. Our people do not hear our teaching in a vacuum but as members of and participants in a society in a fallen world, and our instruction does little good if it does not relate the truth to that world. Garber knows his Bible, and he knows modern culture, and with great creativity he models what it means to allow God's Word to illuminate life and reality. From Solzhenitsyn to Calvin and Hobbes, from pop songs to the *Confessions of Augustine*, from Woody Allen's films to Walker Percy's novels, Garber presses the claims of Christ as the only hope to make sense of a fragmented world. And like Paul in Athens, he discovers modern altars to unknown gods, and demonstrates how to use them as beginning points for a winsome proclamation of the truth.

Fourth, Garber illustrates how to teach effectively through asking creative and probing questions. He is not

only a master at asking thoughtful questions for reflection and discussion, but he listens with intensity because he cares about your answer. As I read *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, I marked the questions he raised and ended up with a list that has already begun to find its way into my teaching and discussions. If we can entice our people to think through the questions he raises, they will be addressing the Big Questions of life and faith in relation to daily life, culture, and the truth of God's Word.

And finally, though perhaps it should be listed first, *The Fabric of Faithfulness* is a superb biblical study of what is required to nurture Christian faithfulness and integrity in today's postmodern world. As Garber explores the history of ideas, the ethic of character, and the sociology of knowledge in light of the lives of students, he concludes that Christians need to be concerned for the three "C's" of education. The faithful weaving together of belief and behavior, personally as well as publicly, for a lifetime of commitment, requires three threads to be woven together into the fabric of their lives:

Convictions: They were taught a worldview which was sufficient for the questions and crises of the next twenty years, particularly the challenge of modern consciousness with its implicit secularization and pluralization.

Character: They met a teacher who incarnated the worldview which they were coming to consciously identify as their own, and in and through that relationship they saw that it was possible to reside within that worldview themselves.

Community: They made choices over the years to live out their worldview in the company of mutually committed folk who provided a network of stimulation and support which showed that the ideas could be coherent across the whole of life.

"Woven together," Garber argues, "convictions, charac-

ter, and community nourish a vision of moral meaning which can stand against the most destructive forces of modern consciousness."

Lest you think my friendship with Steve has caused me to lose all objectivity, *The Fabric of Faithfulness* does have a few flaws that should be mentioned. One is the lack of an index, which is a shame, because the book is the sort of wide-ranging volume that one tends to want to refer to in order to take advantage of its rich content. A second problem is the cover, which is supposed to be the photo of a thoughtful student, but which looks to me more like a young woman with a serious headache. That, and the title, I fear, might discourage some people from reading it who should read it.

One more thing to keep in mind. Dr. Garber's illustrations from the culture range widely, and in the process he mentions books and films some evangelicals might find offensive, but which are at the heart of university culture. He is always careful to point that out, and he is also conscientious in stating where he finds such evidences of fallenness unnecessary and unbecoming. Still, I suspect some readers will lack the necessary discernment in sorting out these details and may be drawn to some resources that, though helpful in opening up elements of our postmodern world, will also contain elements that they find unedifying. This is not a reason to hesitate recommending the book, of course, but merely a reason to train our people in skill in discernment.

The Fabric of Faithfulness is to discipleship, teaching, and education what *God in the Wasteland* is to theology, worship, and preaching. I recommend Dr. Garber's book to you warmly.

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