

*Reading the Bible in Faith, Theological Voices from the Pastorate.*

William H. Lazareth, Editor. Grand Rapids, .MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001. 206 pp.

*Reading the Bible in Faith* is a product of the Center of Theological Inquiry located in Princeton, New Jersey. The center is not affiliated with any denomination or institution, and the book grows from the Center's desire to focus attention on "ordained ministry as a theological vocation and the church as a theological community" (p. xiv). The writers are thus all pastors who work in local congregations of various denominations.

The book is divided into two major divisions, Holy Scripture and Holy Church, with six subdivisions: Hermeneutical Challenges, The Passion of Christ, The Binding of Isaac, Trinitarian Doctrine, Divine Worship, and Christian Proclamation. Based on the conviction that theological work emanates from the daily, reflective life of the church, each of the topics was given to a group of pastors- people woven into the woof and warp of church life- rather than academic professionals. The brevity of the articles has some appeal for the busy reader though brevity should not be construed as a lack of theological insight. The book contains good theological reflection without attempting to produce systematic theology.

Another conviction underlying the work is that the church will not be renewed by "management skills, goal-setting processes, reorganization, public relations, or conflict management" (p. x). The church is a theological community and must utilize those things given by God to sustain and nurture it. Growing healthy churches depends less on technique and more on theological content; problems with churches may have more to do with theological foundations than some prefer to admit.

As can be expected in such a work, not all articles are created equal, but overall the quality is good. For those with bored, cynical Scripture readers in their pews "The Baptized Imagination" might offer a welcome antidote. This and many other articles never cease to extol the importance of Scripture as the source of what makes the church distinctly the church and the importance of the community that is shaped by it. The importance of the religious leader in helping the community become what its scriptures determine is the focus of "A Koinonia of Pastors." This might even be a welcome antidote to the bored, cynical Scripture reader in the pulpit.

All in all this is a well-thought out attempt to locate renewal within the thinking and work of the local minister and through his significance as theologian for his flock. That the answers to modern

problems lie not only with his work but also with the scriptures that help define what the church is ring as true today as ever.

Those of us in Restoration churches will find many of their insights similar to our own. These pastors from predominately mainline denominations have struggled with doctrinal problems that have damaged the fidelity and effectiveness of their churches. That so much of their rhetoric encourages the reader to base his faith and life on Scripture ought to remind us that we need not give up a position of strength which many churches wish they hadn't left.

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