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## Caring and Commitment: Learning to Live the Love We Promise (Book Review)

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book is easily read and includes stimulating discussion questions for each chapter which make it especially adaptable for church groups, citizen associations, and as I have found, for classroom use.

Simon successfully brings together penetrating insights

*Worship the Lord.* Edited by James R. Esther and Donald J. Bruggink. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. Reviewed by Joan M. Ringerwole, Professor of Music.

This attractive paperbound book contains all the liturgical forms needed for public worship in the Reformed Church of America. It was designed to be a liturgical companion to the Reformed Church's hymnal *Rejoice in the Lord: A Hymn Companion to the Scriptures*, edited by Erik Routley. The book is written in five parts: congregational services, occasional services, classical services, the directory for worship, and our song of hope.

In Part I, the *congregational services* are a model for a worship service (liturgy), the sacrament of baptism, reception into communicant membership, the ordination and installation of elders and deacons, and the preparatory exhortation before the celebration of the Lord's Supper. All are familiar forms to those of the Reformed faith with the exception of acceptance into communicant membership. This form is a highly structured way of examining candidates before the elders of the church. The second part of this form is to be used in examining the candidates before the congregation.

The occasional services in the second part of this book include the order of worship for marriage and burial. The services for marriage are similar in content to those which have existed previously in most Reformed churches. However, the addition of the burial service is a unique and valuable one, with the intention that the burial service in the church be an official church service. This service also could be an excellent guideline for ministers who wish to create their own service.

More unusual and perhaps debatable as an order of worship is the worship service: Orders for Christian Healing. Debatable issues might be the Litany of Intercession for Healing and the invitation to "invite worshippers to receive the laying on of hands and anointing with oil" (39). These elements are not customarily a part of the worship liturgy, and in this service they are added after the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There is also a service intended for the hospital.

The third part includes the ordination and installation services of a minister, the reception into the classis and installation of a minister of the Word, and a directory for reception into the classis and installation into a specialized

ministry. All these services are perhaps necessary, but appear somewhat too lengthy to be used in the service after the sermon.

A necessary and fourth part of the book is the directory for worship. If every church member studied these pages, I am sure all the aspects of worship would become more meaningful. Many books which contain forms and doctrinal confessions do not explain the meaning of worship or important elements of worship. Yet, it is extremely crucial to worship that these aspects are available to and understood by every member of the congregation. The various elements of worship all defined from a Reformed, biblical perspective can be an aid for every worshipper. This section is written in a concise way and with a direct approach telling what worship is about. Sermons could develop from the extensive list of definitions pertaining to worship, and the worshiper could study and follow along during the sermon. This section is so important that it could well have been placed first in this book.

Last of all is the Confession of Faith entitled "Our Song of Hope." It is presented in 21 verses in seven sections concluded by a prayer. Whether spoken or sung, one or several sections can easily be used within a worship service. The entire song, however, is very lengthy and if used entirely might consume a major part of the liturgy.

The content and quality of this book is superb with services which can satisfy both the conservative and liberal elements within the church. The models presented are structured and yet flexible.

Donald Bruggink has co-authored other excellent books on aspects of worship, notably *Christ and Architecture*. Therefore, he is a relatively known author; however, his co-author James R. Esther is not. Perhaps a discreet statement about these two people could have been included somewhere in this book, so that those outside the Reformed faith would gain some knowledge about them.

Many Reformed churches could benefit much by using this book in their services. I would also highly recommend it as an excellent resource for anyone who wishes to *Worship the Lord*.

*Caring and Commitment: Learning to Live the Love We Promise.* Lewis B. Smedes. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988. 152 pp. Reviewed by Charles Veenstra, Professor of Communication.

In lively style, Smedes shows the important functions of commitment in long-term relationships. Given the present societal scene in which commitment appears to be declining, this thought-provoking book is a timely contribution. The significant place of commitment in marriage deserves book-length consideration.

Smedes focuses on commitments to people, not to institutions or beliefs. Part I, "The Celebration of Commitment," describes the nature of commitment, why people keep commitments, and the positive value in keeping them. Caring is the essential ingredient that keeps commitment alive. Part II, "The Commit-

ted Relationships," treats commitment in friendship, marriage, and family, Part II. "The Crises of Commitment," sensitively handles problems when commitments collide, when trust is broken, and when bad commitments are made. The crucial element of forgiveness, which the author has examined in much more detail in another well-known book, figures prominently when relationships suffer because people have been unable to do all they promised. He ends by showing that "in the keeping of commitments, we take charge of the future by sustaining the personal relationships that make our life most worth living" (152).

The subject of this book is vitally important, yet the problem I find in Smedes' work is his starting point. Why should one keep commitments? His response: "Commitments are worth the effort, and sometimes, the sacrifice, because, when all is said and done, people are almost always better off because of them" (25). Notice that this answer is essentially a utilitarian one. In such a perspective, one looks to the consequences to determine what is morally correct. The utilitarian criterion is whether or not a particular action promotes the greatest good for those involved. Just exactly what a utilitarian means by "the greatest good" may vary from one person to another. What does Smedes mean when he says people "are almost always better off"? There is less stability in this position than there would be if he had chosen a different starting point for his recommendations. What he says about commitments being good for people in the long run is, of course, true. But that reason alone may not always be convincing to human beings, who, as Smedes clearly states, are not able to look into the future. Therefore, to follow the author's logic, if people are too weak to look beyond a present situation in which a marriage is faltering, how could anyone blame them for calling it quits?

In my opinion, the author misses a wonderful opportunity to show how commitment, particularly in marriage, is a norm which God laid down in the beginning. Since it is a creational principle, Smedes could have argued, people would naturally be better off in the long run if this principle were obeyed. Then he would not have floundered as much as he does in his chapter entitled "When Marriage Cannot Be Forever." He convincingly shows the importance of a caring community to help those who struggle to keep their commitments in marriage. But because the

consequences of commitment have priority for him, he has a hard time drawing the line as to when a marriage should be dissolved. In an earlier chapter, "Why Should a Marriage Be Forever?" he answers his own question, not from Scripture, but by arguing that what we need most is trust. While I do not deny the importance of trust, he could have shown that trust in marriage is a natural consequence of faithfully following a normative standard instituted by God. Instead, his conclusion is that "our own need for trust is why a lifetime commitment is right for marriage" (69).

Smedes tends to focus more on commitments than he does on caring. While he says several important things about caring, he could have elaborated on how caring could revive commitments which are on the rocks. Perhaps more practical helps on how we could implement caring in our communities would have strengthened his book.

A final question that troubles this reader is this: Whom is the author addressing? Is it the Christian community? Is he addressing anyone who might be interested in this topic, irrespective of that person's perspective? My sense is that he wants to address more than the Christian community and thus he does not give explicitly the biblical principles drawn from his worldview. Apparently he wants to make a strong case for commitment to a secular audience. But I think he cannot do that successfully because then he argues extensively from the position of one who does not recognize the critical importance of a Christian worldview in understanding correctly the place of caring and commitment. As a result he has little room to show how caring and commitment are grounded in creation. That Smedes is influenced by his Christian faith is clear in the book. Yet, his position looks as if a Christian perspective can be merged with other perspectives and they will come out at the same place. Such merging I believe to be impossible. At some point in the book he needs to ground caring and commitment solidly in a Christian worldview and show this worldview as the reason we care and commit. Then, if he wanted, he could show how it therefore makes sense in the long run for people to care enough to commit themselves to others.

In spite of these reservations, the book deserves a careful reading. It may provide significant help for those who struggle with commitment.

*Kingdoms in Conflict.* Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn. Copublished by William Morrow and Zondervan, 1987, 400 pp. Reviewed by Charles Veenstra, Professor of Communication.

This book is hard to put down. Filled with examples, it moves quickly from scenario to scenario as the author develops his thesis that tension between church and state is inevitable unless each fulfills its respective roles. He writes: "The kingdoms are in conflict, both vying for ultimate allegiance. By his nature man is irresistibly religious--and he is political. Unless the two can coexist, mankind will continue in turmoil. Tragically, we have lost sight of both the nature of man and the nature of God and His rule over the world. To put it simply, humanists--using that term in its best sense--fail to understand humanity and Christians fail to understand the message of Christ" (49).

A lengthy prologue, which is a fictionalized description of a misguided American president who attempts to bring

Armageddon in Israel because he considers it his duty to fulfill his interpretation of biblical prophecy, sets the tone for the book. Too many Christians, Colson argues, fail to see their proper political role in being a salt and light where they are. Some abandon politics, others marry their Christian faith to a particular set of political policies which are not clearly developed from their faith, and others are caught by the perils of power. When the church fails to be the prophetic voice in the lives of the nation, the state usurps power and tramples on human rights. Christians, urges Colson, must be deeply involved in the political process. The church as institution must preach the gospel for all of life rather than aligning itself in the political system. The state must promote justice and civic order for all.