

Christ" (35). Spurgeon's defense of the Bible is like defending a lion, "open the door and let the lion out; he will take care of himself" (73). In all preaching opportunities, from the sorrow of "the tragic loss of life in the stampede at the Surrey Gardens Hall" (108) to the enormous crowd at the Crystal Palace, Spurgeon pointed to the cross and pushed for conversion. Gems from Spurgeon's lips and pen abound: "Saints have no hell but what they suffer here on earth; sinners will have no heaven but what they have here in this poor troublous world" (153).

Tethered to the Cross rests on the solid scholarship of Breimaier's dissertation while remaining readable and engaging. The clear, crisp writing moves the reader joyfully into the ministry of Spurgeon. Breimaier's summaries of technical discussions provide the lay reader with sufficient context. The format of each chapter, with a helpful section of conclusions, brings the reader gently along while emphasizing the centrality of the cross and conversion. Breimaier's deep affection for Spurgeon never devolves into hagiography as he willingly identifies weaknesses in Spurgeon's hermeneutic. Spurgeon sometimes ignored the "more straightforward interpretations of the biblical text" (166).

The reader new to Spurgeon will gain a clear understanding of the man and his ministry. The experienced Spurgeon reader will be strengthened by his pulpit passion. Preachers will be encouraged by Spurgeon's devotion to the conversion of his listeners. Even where Breimaier exposes weaknesses in Spurgeon's hermeneutic, the underlying fervor for ministry shines through. *Tethered to the Cross* is a valuable addition to the field of homiletical hermeneutics and provides an engaging entryway into the preaching of Charles Spurgeon.

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Pastors and Their Critics: A Guide to Coping with Criticism in the Ministry, by Joel R. Beeke and Nick Thompson. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2020. 177 pp. \$15.99

Seminary students often entertain romantic ideas about pastoral ministry. They imagine a future marked by successive spiritual victories and only occasional defeats. Sometime after ordination, however, a young pastor discovers that reality is just the opposite! The work is difficult, and the critics are many. In all too many cases, the disconnect between expectation and reality leads to disenchantment, and then disengagement, from the Christian ministry.

Enter this new book by Joel Beeke and Nick Thompson. Beeke is the long-time president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) and a minister in the Heritage Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. Thompson is a recent graduate of PRTS who is pursuing ordination in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Together, these men offer

the first-ever, book-length treatment on pastoral criticism from a Reformed perspective.

While the book is primarily aimed at seminary students and young gospel ministers, it will undoubtedly be a help to seasoned pastors as well. The book exhibits the theological depth that we have come to expect from Beeke, and it is replete with personal examples from his ministry which will resonate with pastors young and old. Thompson's appendix, which contains his "Seminarian's Decalogue," will be especially helpful to students preparing for their entrance into ministry.

The main body of the work comes in four parts. The first part offers a brief biblical theology of abuse. The authors remind us that "the earliest appearance of character-distorting verbal abuse was actually in the garden of Eden. And the object of this destructive criticism was God Himself." The LORD was subjected to "deceitful, godless words" and attacks on both his generosity and integrity (19–20). The authors also discuss the abuse suffered by Moses, Aaron, David, Nehemiah, and the apostle Paul. Christ receives the greatest treatment, for he "is not only our representative; He is also our exemplar" (37). The authors take us through the verbal onslaughts and physical torture that our Lord endured, finally culminating in his crucifixion. We see how Christ endured this injustice without abandoning his calling or sinning against his enemies. "When we meditate on Christ," the authors tell us, "the Spirit meets with us and enables us to say, 'He suffered for me, and now I will suffer this criticism for Him. God has vindicated His Son, and God will vindicate me one day as well'" (42).

In part two, the authors provide a number of practical tips for receiving and responding to criticism in a Christ-like way. First, they encourage us to develop a realistic view of the ministry. This is done by remembering the tragic reality of sin, the destructive schemes of Satan, and the sanctifying purposes of God. Second, they encourage us to consider the source of the criticism we receive—is it coming from a nonbeliever or a believer? Is the believer mature or immature? Is it coming from an individual or from a group of friends? Third, they encourage us to discern, to the best of our ability, the chief motive of our critic(s). Is the critic seeking our good or our destruction? Once we understand the source and purpose of the criticism, we are ready to respond properly to it. And when responding, the authors encourage us to practice humility, prayer, and grace.

In part three, the authors discuss the best ways for pastors to *offer* constructive criticism and how they can foster an environment which permits constructive criticism between church members. Regarding the former, they suggest giving heed to the ancient categories of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. In other words, in offering criticism to others, pastors should think carefully about how their criticism is framed. Regarding the latter, pastors can foster a culture of constructive criticism by (1) preaching Christ; (2) praying continually; (3) pleading guilty [i.e., confessing their own faults]; (4) providing platforms for people to voice their concerns; (5) planning big [i.e., taking risks and being willing to

fail publicly]; and (6) cultivating patience.

The fourth part offers a “theological vision” for coping with criticism. The authors plead with pastors to reorient their perspective so they are not focused on the destructive criticism they receive, but on the glory that awaits faithful ministers. The authors remind pastors that they are ministering for the glory of God, not for the applause of men; their task is to build the Church, not to enjoy a life free of pain; and their concern should be the Judgment Day of Christ, not the cruel judgments of their peers. “Oh, happy day when this mortality shall put on immortality, and we shall ever be with the Lord!” the authors write. “Let all the criticism that our Sovereign God in His infinite wisdom calls us to endure in this life make us more homesick for the criticism-free land of glory. Let our vision be consumed with this world of love, sweetening the often loveless adversity we face here below” (163).

A book like this one was long overdue. Beeke and Thompson have done a wonderful service to the Church, and I hope the book finds a wide readership. I purchased ten copies to hand out to my friends in ministry. I strongly recommend that you buy a few as well—one for yourself and several others to give away.

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Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe by Voddie Baucham. Washington, D. C.: Salem Books. xvii, 254 pp. \$24.99.

“For such a time as this” (Esth 4:14). Tensions have been mounting over questions of race and social justice. Marxist ideologies in the evangelical church cause it to stagger under an onslaught of cultural crises that threaten to undue the work of God today. Some Americans consider all whites to be racists because of the simple fact of their birth. They allege that racism permeates our culture, and whites are expected to own this reality, beg for forgiveness, regardless of any personal, overt acts and to support reparations for wrongs long ago perpetrated. Persons of color, it is said, are hunted by the police, who as a group are out of control and desperately need to be reined in or defunded altogether. Sadly, they conclude, the church, at least the white church, has been complicit in this legacy. It is a part of the problem, not the solution.

These are stunning accusations that, if true, need to be taken seriously. Many of these charges cannot be ignored. However, things get complicated when a white person objects to any of these indictments. Any objection is said to show the extent of the problem. But this makes the accusations unfalsifiable. To reject them at any level is to prove