

Strange Lyre: The Pentecostalization of Evangelical Worship, by David De Bruyn. Douglassville, GA: G3 Press, 2024. 69 pp. \$14.00.

When I first received an email announcing the publication of *Strange Lyre*, I was so intrigued by the title that I immediately ordered a copy. The connection to John MacArthur's critique of Pentecostalism in *Strange Fire* (2013) was clear, and I wanted to see if the author would view Pentecostal worship through the same thorough lens that MacArthur had when evaluating the doctrine and practices of this movement.

David De Bruyn serves as the pastor of New Covenant Baptist Church in Johannesburg, South Africa. He hosts a weekly radio program, speaks frequently at conferences, and also ministers at Shepherds Seminary Africa. In this short book his thesis is directly stated in the Introduction: "Pentecostal worship has a matrix of distinctives that [demonstrate] a clear break from historic, Protestant worship" (5).

But as the subtitle of the book reveals, there is another thesis which is actually the main goal of the book. De Bruyn strives to show that Pentecostal worship distinctives "are widely shared and practiced in non-charismatic, or cessationist circles" (41) and that Pentecostal worship has caused evangelicals to embrace the religious feelings of Pentecostalism, resulting in a slide toward and acceptance of charismatic doctrine (54–55).

De Bruyn describes the distinctives of Pentecostal worship in the Introduction (5–7): (1) a populist approach to tradition, art, and ecclesial authority; (2) praise and worship theology; and (3) an emphasis on extemporaneity and intensity. He explains each of these three elements in the ensuing chapters.

The first chapter, "Early Beginnings of Pentecostal Worship" uses Nathan Hatch's fourfold description of populist folk religious music in *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1991) to show how Pentecostalism embraced this mood in its worship practices.

In chapter two ("Pentecostal 'Praise and Worship'") De Bruyn compares historic Christian worship practices with the "Five Phase Model" adopted by charismatic theologians. These phases build upon each other, beginning with Invitation and moving to Engagement, Exaltation, Adoration, and culminating in Intimacy (19). Accordingly, De Bruyn believes that the Pentecostal model of worship emphasizes *experience* as opposed to the historical model which stresses *response* (20).

Chapters three and four deal with the issues of extemporaneity (spontaneity) and intensity (experience of emotional intimacy). De Bruyn comments on both of these concepts in chapter 3 ("The Idols of Intensity and Extemporaneity"), but his main intent appears to be an investigation of *intensity* in chapter four ("Nothing but Feelings"). He defines intensity as a "strongly felt experience of emotion, intimacy, joy, wonder, or happiness" (33). De Bruyn believes that felt emotions in worship may be placed into one of two categories—affections (those controlled by a renewed mind and the Spirit) and passions (those controlled by bodily appetites). And he tries to make the case that the

intensity sought in Pentecostal worship manifests itself in “manipulative, sensually-controlled passion[s]” (40).

Next, De Bruyn shifts to his second main thesis in chapter 5 (“Cessmasticism: The Strange Hybrid of Contemporary Worship”). He makes the case that many non-charismatic, cessationist churches share the same approach to worship as Pentecostals. First, he asserts that the intensity prized in Pentecostal circles is embraced as a “laudable goal” in non-charismatic churches (41) because these churches follow the “flow-like” worship of Praise and Worship theology and the choice of songs mimic the “Five Phase” model of charismatic worship (42). Second, non-charismatic evangelicals uncritically accept the music of charismatic songwriters. De Bruyn notes that this acceptance is not a problem due to the contemporary nature of these songs or to the associations that these songs might manifest. Rather the problem is that this charismatic music leans closer to the passion side of the emotional spectrum rather than the affection side (44).

With these two points in mind, De Bruyn lists three results that occur because of this cessmasticism. First, “there is a push to perform these songs with the kind of t-shirt-and-jeans folksiness that seems to accompany the more passionate nature of the music” (44–45). Second, these charismatic songs “tend to choke out older and classical hymnody” (45). Third, “the congregation finds itself increasingly cut off from the tradition of Christian worship” (46).

In the concluding chapter De Bruyn asserts the following: (1) Pentecostal worship has been aberrant from the very start and is “full-blown heterodox worship” (52); (2) non-charismatic churches who have incorporated charismatic worship practices have embarked on a slight course change (53) that eventually results in (3) changes in doctrinal positions (54). De Bruyn’s summary is: “Evangelical worship has, for the most part, embraced the ‘religious feelings’ of Pentecostalism. Not surprisingly, charismatic doctrine has begun to capture the theological minds of those who were formerly cessationists” (55).

As a follow-up to De Bruyn’s argument, Scott Aniol provides an afterword (57–69) where he presents “covenant-renewal worship,” “the biblical alternative” to Pentecostal worship (57). This theology of worship is “a time in which believers meet with God at his invitation so that he might speak to us through his Word, sanctifying our minds and hearts, and so that we might respond with appropriate affections toward him” (68).

Has De Bruyn proved his twofold theses that (1) Pentecostal worship is other than Protestant worship and that (2) most non-charismatic churches have adopted Pentecostal worship practices, changing their religious feelings and doctrinal positions? In regard to the first point, he has made a start but still lacks needed support for his assertion. For example, he suggests three distinctives of Pentecostal worship but cites no reference to any authoritative study on the subject nor does he give any primary source arguments from Pentecostal writers that might show these distinctives. The one citation provided (there are only four

footnotes in the book) from a charismatic (22) is a secondary citation and is not even used to support one of the three distinctives. At least the afterword by Aniol gives the reader some explanation of Protestant worship which may be used as a comparison against the Pentecostal worship style described in chapters 1–4.

De Bruyn's second thesis is entirely unsubstantiated. Other than asserting his point, he gives no support, especially when he claims that charismatic worship approaches are "widely shared and practiced in non-charismatic" churches (41). In fact, his personal observations (41–43) are his *only* support. Why should the reader believe that "most evangelical churches today worship like charismatics" (57)? We need some warrant to accept this argument. Furthermore, even if non-charismatic churches worship like Pentecostals (a point unproven), De Bruyn would have us believe that these churches will soon be suffering from doctrinal decline. Could he provide even one current example of this occurrence? Sadly, no evidence is forthcoming.

This book did not fulfill my expectations because it seemed like an opinion looking for facts but finding none to support it. I am unaware of other books seeking to make a similar argument, but if the reader is interested in good books on worship generally, consider these instead: *Biblical Foundations of Corporate Worship* (Scott Aniol), *Christ-Centered Worship* (Bryan Chapell), and *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth).

Jon Pratt

Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Plymouth, MN

Mere Christian Hermeneutics: Transfiguring What It Means to Read the Bible Theologically, by Kevin Vanhoozer. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2024. 424 pp. \$39.99.

Kevin Vanhoozer's work in hermeneutics has spanned several decades, and this book is a culmination of those previous efforts. His bibliography lists twenty of his own previous publications, including twelve journal articles and eight books either written or co-written by him. This should not imply, however, that he is simply repeating himself. His reading in the field of hermeneutics is expansive, and he shows minute familiarity with a vast array of sources directly related to or overlapping in some way the whole field of Bible interpretation. Reading Vanhoozer gives one exposure to many thinkers one might never think to consult, and he interacts with the scholarship of biblical interpretation at a deep and profound level. His purpose is to show how the church—and he means *church* in the broadest possible way—has always been committed to reading the Bible in a unique way, i.e., theologically. The church has done this with respect to the very words of Scripture, i.e., without fanciful, non-sensical interpretations. Because such an approach binds all