

The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-lovers, Marketers, and Emergents in the Postmodern World

By David F. Wells

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Reviewed by George C. Scipione

When I was in Seminary Dr. Cornelius Van Til would joke and say, “ You have to read this book; beg, borrow or steal it, but read it!” Well dear brother you need to read this book. Wells surgically opens the festering wounds of the evangelical movement in the United States of America and attempts to pour in some gospel ointment to bring healing. Wells is the Andrew Mutch Distinguished Professor of Historical Theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I find myself wanting to talk with this man to gain even more insight. I believe you will respond this way as well.

Wells has written four titles addressing the issues at stake as they have developed since World War II; *No Place for Truth; or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (1993); *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (1994); *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (1998); *Above All Earthly Pow'rs: Christ in a Postmodern World* (2005), all published by Eerdmans. In his preface he states,

Running through these four books have been five main doctrinal themes:

truth, God, self, Christ, and the church. It is these five themes that I am

taking up here. Since this is so, I am not, for the most part, documenting

the literature and research upon which this book rests since that has already

been done. It is therefore has no footnotes.

This makes the book read as a pastoral plea rather than an academic tome. Wells allows no dust to settle or accumulate on his powerful, polemical plea. He is a voice crying in the wilderness of relativity in which the evangelical church wanders lost and confused as the new Israel. She lusts after the leeks, garlic, onions and melons of acceptable American culture. She has more in common with American Idol than she does with her living Lord, her divine Bridegroom. Wells dissects the seeker friendly marketing approach that has gripped many if not most evangelical churches and exposes the emerging church movement as well. He shows how sinfully impoverished these compromises are and how a biblical alternative is the only antidote to kill these compromises.

Wells writes in a way that has me saying, " I wish I had thought of that " or " I wish I said it that way". His chapters: *The Lay of the Evangelical Land; Christianity for Sale; Truth; God; Self; Christ; Church*; all hit the nail on the head . One can only weep over the state of the church as he has captured it in all of its gory, festering stench.

You need to read this book for at least four reasons: one, you need to know the church terrain that you inhabit so you can protect your sheep; two, you need to know its content so that you can recommend it to your sheep and to warn of any flaws (Nothing except the Bible is perfect this side of the new heavens and new earth : this book is no exception. The primary flaw is some politically correct, gender inclusive language and the implication that women can be ordained preachers); three, you need to better grasp how worldly ideas from secular psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology have infested the evangelical church and in turn made her unfaithful to and out of contact with her King and Head, Jesus Christ; four, you need to grasp why the Biblical, nouthetic counseling movement is significant as a counter-intelligence, special ops mission in the battle for the purity and fidelity of the church and how this battle fits into the broader culture wars.

Brother, beg, borrow or.... well, don't steal but somehow get it. But by all means, read it in your attempts to stay sharp and battle ready in order that you may lead Christ's troops to glory. This book exposes the world as it has infiltrated the church. It shows some of Satan's tactics in trying to devour the church. It may even expose some of your fleshly temptations to emulate the "success" of the Marketers and Emergents . By God's mercy and grace it may help to refocus our attention upon our commander and Chief Shepherd and the great joy of hearing " well done, good and faithful under-shepherd; enter into the joy of your Lord."