

selected. For the non-specialist scholar, then, Brackney's list is probably the more useful.

There are some areas in which the limits of the formats probably prevented adequate coverage. A point of interest for non-specialist Baptist scholars for instance is the role and response of American Baptists to slavery. Here neither treatment is entirely satisfying. Both authors note the divisions in Baptist attitudes to slavery in the nineteenth century but emphasise the progressive approaches. Brackney discusses the issues as part of Baptists' activism for human rights. Leonard places slavery within the broader question of race relations. For the reader seeking to comprehend pro-slavery positions of many Baptists, especially in the South, there is a disappointing paucity of analysis. There is perhaps a hint of 'whiggism' here, with the more palatable emancipation efforts being stressed.

It is, however, always a little uncharitable to criticise works, especially survey treatments like these, for what they leave out. Both Brackney and Leonard offer excellent introductions to Baptist history and development in the most Baptist region of the world, providing considerable insight to students in places and cultures where the story is very different.

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**D.G. Bloesch, *Spirituality Old and New: Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life*. Grand Rapids: IVP; Nottingham: Apollos, 2007. (191pp.)**

Spirituality has become one of the most written about subjects in contemporary thought – both secular and Christian. Most of these works are consumed with defining 'spirituality' and articulating its importance or otherwise for the targeted readership. Many Christians see the spirituality renaissance as something of a boon, an open door to Christian evangelism. Donald Bloesch is not so optimistic. Bloesch, Professor of theology emeritus at Dubuque Theological Seminary, is well known to most Evangelicals in the academic world

for his prolific output, erudite and exhaustive surveys of various topics, and his bold and impassioned writing style. Never one to hold back with an opinion, Bloesch clearly sees the task of writing as the positive expression of his beliefs set against the backdrop of those beliefs with which he does not agree. Having been a student of his writing for over a decade now I have come to appreciate Bloesch's candour, courage, and cadence. His writing style is a model of eloquence and his theology is always rigorously informed by a respect for Holy Scripture and the role of tradition.

In an earlier project, the 7 volumes of his Christian Foundations series, Bloesch's theological commitments and method were laid bare. What stands out in this series is his commitment to a theology of Word and Spirit: a catholic, evangelical, churchly theology that seeks to resource the church for its witness in the world. While Bloesch self-consciously works from a Protestant, Reformation, and Calvinist orientation, his catholic commitments are thus that he seeks to build bridges wherever theologically possible. The current work contains, for instance, favourable reflections on Augustine, John Wesley, the Booth's, Luther, and Thérèse of Lisieux, the latter with the suggestion she could be an 'evangelical saint'! All this is, of course, by way of introduction. What may Bloesch so introduced have to say about spirituality and the contemporary and pluralistic flourishing of the term? Will he be in favour of it or critical of it? Will he speak primarily to the church or to the academy?

*Spirituality Old and New* is vintage Bloesch. Every page is ripe with quotations. Each chapter is packed with a theology enriched by the tradition. At every turn Bloesch is quick to point out the weakness and shallowness resident in any spirituality that is not expressly evangelical (by which he means biblical as much as anything else). Over eight chapters and five short appendices, three 'types' of spirituality are surveyed: mystical, biblical, and the new spirituality. The reader is left with no confusion over the supremacy of the biblical view, something Bloesch terms 'biblical personalism', to that of 'classical mysticism' and 'new age' varieties of spirituality. The five appendices are short reflections on aspects of these three types of spirituality. Appendix A considers the perils of Gnosticism as a form of mysticism, Appendix B rebukes the New Age movement and its 'Christian' advocates as a version of the new spirituality, while appendices C, D, and E contain comments on various aspects of Christian spirituality including a hymn of pietism entitled, 'One Thing Needful, Greatest Blessing', by Joachim Neander, that Bloesch considers profitable for all Christian traditions today.

In a work on spirituality the first thing one looks for is a definition. In the Preface Bloesch defines 'spirituality' as follows: 'Spirituality is inseparable from theology'; 'True spirituality is service to the most high and holy God through service to our fellow human beings'; 'A spirituality that can ignite the church will furthermore be churchly'; 'Spirituality in the Christian sense is not so much an upward progression nor an inward possession. Instead, it is an outward succession'; and finally, 'We must recognize that biblical faith creates its own form of spirituality, which resists any accommodation to cultural ideology and religion' (pp.13-15). Simply put Bloesch recommends a spirituality that is churchly, rational, traditional, mystical (with specific qualifications), and cotemporary. This definition may not satisfy everyone; it does not define 'spirituality' so much as describe it, and the rest of the book continues in the same vein.

*Spirituality Old and New* is as interesting as it is frustrating. It is not written for the church, generally considered, but for the academy. And yet, it is not a work of academic precision but more of a personal theological reflection by a respected mentor in the faith. For that reason those who know Bloesch will tend to love it, others may well wonder what the purpose of the work is. This should not, however, put people off reading the work. The comments Bloesch makes about the role of Scripture, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit are timely and sage. Those advocates of a form of Christian spirituality which lacks theological robustness will be rebuked, while others who may have tended to overlook the role of spirituality in the Christian faith will find themselves being chided. Finally, the spirituality Bloesch advocates encourages responsible involvement in the world. In his own words, 'The practice of faith in the world (*orthopraxis*) flows from the right praise of God in the church (*orthodoxa*). The ethical is rooted in the spiritual, but the spiritual finds its culmination in the ethical' (p.149). If spirituality is to be Christian at all, argues Bloesch, then 'true spirituality begins with God. False spirituality begins and ends with the self' (p.150). In a world of competing spiritualities Bloesch offers a useful if not complete guide dividing the chaff from the wheat of spirituality.

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