

Mounce, for instance, discusses preterism, historicism, futurism, and idealism, and rightly perceives strengths and weaknesses in each approach. His position is "that the predictions of John find their final and complete fulfilment in the last days of history" (30). He seems to maintain a fulfilment in the first century and another one toward the end of human history. I could not follow his line of reasoning in this respect. Another example may suffice. The author makes a distinction between form and content with regard to the millennium which, when accepted, allows for more or less radical reinterpretation of the biblical text (370).

Nevertheless, Mounce must be praised for treating the biblical text thoroughly. He avoids the pitfalls of explaining too little versus commenting on the biblical text too extensively, which may cause the reader to shy away from the commentary. In some cases, the exposition opens a window for applying the text to the present situation (115). As compared to the first edition, there are greater clarity, better transitions and summaries, and a better flow in the explanation of the unfolding images of the book of Revelation. The references to the OT and NT as well as the extracanonical literature are commendable. The volume has a helpful, updated, and quite extensive bibliography. The first edition was already a standard within the nondispensationalist, evangelical tradition. The second edition even surpasses it and has all the ingredients to remain this standard.

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EKKEHARDT MÜLLER

Nash, Robert, Jr., and Loren Mead. *An 8-Track Church in a CD World: The Modern Church in a Postmodern World*. Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1997. 132 pp. \$16.95.

Robert N. Nash, Jr., is assistant professor of religion at Shorter College in Rome, Georgia, and holds a Ph.D. degree in American Christianity from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a coauthor of *The Bible in English Translation: An Essential Guide* and is a contributor to an edited volume on cross-cultural ministry entitled *Mary Nations Under God: Ministering to Cultural Groups in America*.

Nash cogently argues that American Christian churches must embrace reform if they are to remain relevant in a postmodern culture and meet the spiritual challenges of American life in the twenty-first century. In order to make the challenges facing the American church clear, he discusses the three periods of human history and shows how the church has been influenced by the ideas about God that emerged in each of these three successive periods. These periods are the premodern, the modern, and the postmodern. Nash identifies the three primary functions of the church as (1) offering God's grace and love to its culture, (2) enhancing the spiritual lives of its members, and (3) providing a place of community that mirrors God's kingdom. These three primary functions of the Church remain irrespective of the period of human history one is considering.

Nash cites the fact that Christianity is no longer the main religion in America, but has in fact become just one of several religions contending for the loyalty of Americans. Therefore he challenges the church to become knowledgeable about other religions instead of participating in internal fighting. He also challenges both

the “liberals” and the “conservatives” to unite in upholding the centrality of Jesus and to focus on the growth of their members in terms of their relationship with Christ. Nash challenges churches to develop new modes of worship that will be relevant to the needs of the postmodern world. In addition, he encourages churches to capitalize on their strengths as they strive to carve niches for themselves from which to serve the society in which they exist. Churches must recover the “love for the stranger” that is at the heart of the Christian faith.

Nash boldly identifies and discusses the various problems the Church must tackle if it is to compete from a position of strength in postmodern America. He correctly points out the fact that unless the Church examines itself critically and focuses on its obligations to the community, it will become irrelevant to the people it is supposed to serve (20). By deemphasizing the need for making Christianity a rational religion that is explainable through science, he seeks to bring Christianity back to the basics—namely, the experience of a saving relationship with Jesus (45-46). In addition, his point that many churches “are empty spiritual shells that claim to be spiritually vital, but that are, in truth, spiritually dead,” is right on target (51-53). The suggested “eight theses” constitute a good diagnosis of the situation in American Christianity and if embraced could help in reversing the trend.

Nash’s point that “science will always win the battle against religion on the playing field of human reason” (16) is an assumption that is challengeable. It is one’s presuppositions that determine one’s criteria of what to accept as probably true or false. That Christianity cannot be proven by the modern scientific method does not prove it to be false. His point seems to be directed against taking the Bible as a book of propositional truths. He emphasizes what he considers its spatiotemporal limitations. When Nash writes that churches are divided “not by theological distinctiveness, but rather by the culture war between traditionalists and progressives” (23), he seems to be de-emphasizing the theological differences among denominations.

Nash’s assertion that what the Christian believes is “simply faith assertions,” with “no proofs” “except the proofs I know within my own heart” (34), seems to suggest that he is advocating a “watering down” of the unique claims of Christianity in view of the plurality of religions with their differing, contending claims to uniqueness. However, the fact that there are competing truths should not necessarily lead us to jettison the special and unique claims of Christianity. In addition, his apparent suggestion of a witnessing approach that emphasizes befriending people in order to break down walls of prejudice and misunderstanding seems to be an awakening to the need to carry out the command of Jesus to go and witness of him to all people. Christians need to be gently purposive in trying to “love people into the kingdom.”

Overall, his book achieves his stated purpose of helping the “traditional” churches discover new ways to minister effectively in the postmodern American society by adapting the gospel message to the new realities of the world. The book is good for all those who are interested in church growth and are concerned with the contextualization of Christianity so that it may be more relevant to the needs of the postmodern world.