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Review: Putting an End to the Worship Wars

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must realize the continual struggle of the spiritual warfare that will be encountered.

One shortcoming of Whitney's work is the overwhelming prospect of implementing all ten spiritual disciplines at once. Perhaps the inclusion of practical steps for initiating the process would be less intimidating. Such a plan could incorporate the gradual building of each discipline into the Christian's life, even simultaneously. Further individualization through a mentor could occur if such a plan incorporated the existing areas of strengths as the beginning building blocks. Additionally, this reviewer would have appreciated a brief survey of the history of spiritual disciplines.

Whitney has provided an excellent overview of the major disciplines of the Christian walk. Whitney's style remains both challenging and balanced. He avoids the extreme of monastic practices of the past. An excellent source of instruction, many seminaries require *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* for their first-year students, providing a comprehensive guide to the Christian walk.

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Putting an End to Worship Wars, by Elmer L. Towns. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1997. Pp. 193.

Elmer Towns is well-known for his church growth materials. He has authored numerous works on the structure and methodologies involved in church growth and evangelism. In *Worship Wars*, Towns shifts his focus to worship styles prevalent in contemporary American Christianity. He states, "Each past generation has fought its own theological battle. . . . That battle today is over worship" (p. 147). It is Towns' thesis that worship wars can be prevented when Christians understand and accept the worth of diversity within the body of Christ. In the last decade, the improved understanding of the implementation, role, and worth of diverse spiritual gifts in the local church has benefited church growth. Towns desires his readers to gain the same appreciation for the diversity of worship styles.

Towns divides his twelve chapters into three sections: "Current Tension over Worship," "Six Paradigms of Worship," and "Principles to Remember." After his conclusion, Towns gives the reader thirty-one pages of appendices, divided into "Glossary of Terms," "Biblical Words for Worship," "Christian Leaders on Worship," and "Study Guide."

Worship Wars "is a descriptive book that reflects the trends and tensions in our contemporary church over worship practices (p 1)." Towns uses the first

section, "Current Tensions over Worship," to develop the reader's understanding of current philosophies of worship. Towns identifies six worship styles currently in use in the church, using personal experiences from his own "pilgrimage of worship" to demonstrate how mercurial modern Christians can be concerning worship styles. Towns' accounts of worship battles should be sufficient to awaken the complacent. Forced terminations and church splits are commonplace. Towns' narratives demonstrate the worship-style factor. His stories are too familiar to ignore. *Worship Wars*, unlike many Church Growth Movement works, is not narrowly focused on numbers, methods, and results. It addresses the tangible and intangible areas of church growth. The strength of *Worship Wars* is its concern with the spiritual wholeness of the church. Towns helps the reader understand the causes of the changes in worship styles.

In "Six Paradigms of Worship," Towns takes a chapter to identify, describe, and evaluate each of the six worship styles. His stereotypical service for each style is priceless. This reviewer was transported into each setting by Towns' imagery. His rendition of each service reflects his research. According to Towns, each style reflects its own peculiar purpose, expectations, bonds, strengths, contributions, and weaknesses. The reviewer does question Towns' view of worship as reflected in these six chapters. For example, in "The Renewal Church" Towns states, "The worship time is unquestionably the focus of the service. This time is usually followed by an opportunity for the pastor to share from the Scriptures (p. 84)." This apparent division of worship and preaching appears throughout the text.

Towns concludes his work with "Principles to Remember." He gives suggestions dealing with the principles involved in the development of different worship styles. This section contains the other area of concern for the reviewer. In his desire for peace, Towns attempts to be nonjudgmental concerning Christians who move from one worship style to another in the course of their lives. His exegesis is suspect when he states that "the Bible calls this type of person immature—'children, tossed to and fro'" (Eph. 4:14). He continues, "Let's be slow to criticize those who change their worship experience" (p. 131). It would be easy to draw the conclusion from *Worship Wars* that constant membership migration is acceptable in the modern church. Towns' final chapter describes the worship changes that have taken place since 1945 and trends that Towns expects to shape the direction of worship for the future.

Worship Wars can aid the worship leader in understanding his own involvement in worship. In this reviewer's opinion, Towns does not deal adequately with the reasons church members often fight changes in worship styles. There are other works that flesh out future trends and the psychology involved in a culture undergoing rapid change better than *Worship Wars*. Towns admits that one must be careful in promoting change. With Elmer Towns' vast experience, *Putting an End to Worship Wars* would be greatly enhanced if the author had included a section on implementing changes in worship. A chapter, "The Eclectic

Church," dealing with diversifying programs and elements of worship style would be an alternative to the "migratory membership model" that occurs in the text.

Seminarians or pastors that are enamored with "the cutting edge" of worship should spend time reading and reflecting on this book. Such action would, at best, equip them for success, and at least, save them from being a casualty in the worship war. "When you change your form of worship for convenience or to be more successful, it's not from the heart. Like Esau, you've sold your birthright for a mess of pottage" (p. 4). Towns wants the reader to gain an understanding and tolerance of different worship styles. *Worship Wars* is not a resource for a pastor wishing to change styles. However, *Worship Wars* can aid the worship leader to understand his own involvement in worship. Elmer Towns has again contributed a worthwhile book to people concerned with church growth.

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Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality, edited by Harvie M. Conn. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997. Pp. 271.

Though the church has been slow to meet the world in the cities, Harvie M. Conn sees growing signs of evangelical interest in reaching them for Christ. This does not come at a moment too soon. The populations of Mexico City, Shanghai, Tokyo/Yokohama, Beijing, and São Paulo will each exceed twenty-one million by A.D. 2000, and "according to UN predictions, world population in cities will reach 51.3 percent by the end of this century" (p. 84). At the turn of the century, only twenty cities boasted populations of more than 1 million; that number reached 235 in 1980. In 1950 only two cities had more than 10 million inhabitants; in 1980, ten cities had reached more than 10 million, and by A.D. 2000, twenty-five will have reached that number (p. 132). How to reach these cities is the subject of *Planting and Growing Urban Churches: From Dream to Reality*.

Harvie M. Conn (Litt.D.) is professor of missions at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, and the editor of the quarterly journal *Urban Mission*. He has written many books and articles on the mission of the church and served as a missionary in Korea from 1960-1972 under the auspices of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church in the United States.

Planting and Growing Churches is divided into four parts, each preceded by an introductory article by Conn and followed by an annotated bibliography for further research on the topic of the preceding part. Each article is taken from

a previous issue of *Urban Missions* and written by a leading authority in or practitioner of planting and growing urban churches. Part 1 includes three articles on research. Part 2 has three articles on strategy planning, and part 3 four articles on targeting. Part 4 is comprised of seven articles on samples, or models, of planting and growing an urban church by seven actual practitioners who have applied strategy to real, living contexts. Indices of subjects, names, and Scriptures follow part 4.

The articles in part 1, "Research: Searching for the Right Questions," introduce the reader to the value of research in planting and growing urban churches. Conn introduces part 1 with a brief history of urban church research from 1960 to the present. In chapter 1, C. Kirk Hadaway shows how research can benefit urban churches and denominations by providing facts necessary for decision making, testing church growth strategies, and developing new models. In chapter 2, James R. Engel demonstrates the practical significance of "micro research" in cross-cultural urban strategy. In chapter 3, John Holmann explains the approach of the "Caleb Project Research Expeditions" in determining the sociological realities of the unreached two thirds-world cities in order to envision what a culturally appropriate church might look like and how to plant it.

Conn introduces part 2, "Strategy Planning: Searching for the Right Answers," with a biblical basis for strategy planning. Following Conn's introduction, Ray Bakke explains in chapter 4 the multiple challenges evangelicals face in planting and growing urban churches. Craig W. Ellison argues for addressing the felt needs of those who dwell in the cities in chapter 5, offering biblical and logical justification for such ministry, and countering evangelical arguments against it. Ralph W. Neighbor, Jr. outlines thirteen steps in creating a strategy for planting and growing a church in an urban setting in chapter 6.

Conn traces the churches "checkered" history of reaching the urban centers in his introduction to part 3, "Targeting: Linking Church to Urban Community." In chapter 7, David Britt prescribes a modification of the "homogenous unit principle," prescribing the "congruence" principle in its place. He states, "Where the cultural symbols of a congregation are congruent with those of a local community, the gospel will receive an easier hearing" (p. 144). Viv Grigg argues from Scripture in chapter 8 concerning the need for an incarnational missionary model to aid in ministering to the growing number of urban poor. In chapter 9, Robert C. Linthicum explains how networking among urban Christians and churches will enable them to effectively minister to urban dwellers. Rebecca Long (chapter 10) retells the story of her ministry with the Zapotec in Mexico, explaining how their relationship in a rural setting in Mexico determined her effectiveness at evangelizing those Zapotec who subsequently moved to Los Angeles.

In his introduction to part 4, Conn discusses evangelical models of reaching the cities of the world using a modification of H. Richard Niebuhr's models in *Christ and Culture*. He recommends the model of Christ transforming culture or the city, and includes examples of evangelicals who have attempted to reach