

Boekbesprekings / Book Reviews

Metzger, P L 2007 – *Consuming Jesus: Beyond race and class divisions in a consumer church*

Publisher: Eerdmans. Pages: 201. Price: \$16.00

Reviewer: Dr M J Manala (University of South Africa)

Dr Metzger highlights his concern about the structural coldness and insensitivity to the issues of race and class divisions evident in the American Evangelical Christianity, which he calls a consumer religion. He ascribes this coldness and insensitivity to an absence of practical love which he says is inhibiting efforts to spread the love of Jesus Christ.

In chapter 1, Metzger traces the historical missteps of American evangelicalism over the years, leading to a reversal of the evangelical legacy in terms of social and cultural engagement. This chapter outlines ably the consumer-driven religion's privatization and power politics. Metzger highlights appeals to what he calls *anti-intellectualism* in their theologizing and the adoption thereof, retreating to a teaching of the gospel, which focuses exclusively on *soul saving* that strengthened antipathy to social engagement, developing *tendencies of premillennial eschatology*, moving away from *world-changing gospel and embracing a world-resisting and worldly gospel*. All of this is the result of the evangelicals' pride, power mongering and falling out with God and his purpose for the Church of Christ.

In chapter 2, the consumer Balrog that is characterized by adherence to homogenous church growth principles, interest in numerical, monetary and political success, is challenged and exposed as the worst form of betrayal of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This consumer ethos, Metzger posits as a divorce by American evangelicals from Christ's central message of love that can never mix with the consumerist ethos. Metzger quite harshly criticizes this ethos and prophetically denounces it, cursing its possible continuation. The churches are being exposed in this chapter as followers of a disordered vision that leads to their failure to confront and deal with race and class divisions in the church.

Metzger in chapter 3 investigates the unconquerable power of Christ's atoning work. He shows that the power of consumerism, legalism, racialism and class division cannot stand in the face of Christ's atonement power. Metzger uses Christ's victory over the powers and principalities to inform and encourage the needed engagement of the church in the struggle against consumerism, legalistic distortions, racialization and divisions.

Chapter 4 presents recommendations towards an inside-out shake up which the author indicates, is needed to remove the individualistic and consumerist conception of salvation. He calls for a rebirth, i.e. regeneration, repentance and forgiveness in order for the American Evangelical Christians to overcome race and class barriers in a consumer church, not just affect structural change or engagement. The evangelical theological legacy, emphasizing rebirth, primary relationships and personal responsibility is roped in as means of combating moralism, escapism and consumerist teachings and structures.

In chapter 5, the author presents the vision of the church as the Ark that has at its centre and is dependent upon the Scripture and the Lord's Supper for its "unimaginable power that intends to confront and consume race and class divisions in the church". In this context, the church should understand the Bible story as "the ultimate Story". Metzger says: "We must approach the Bible ... from the standpoint that it envelopes and consumes us when we consume it" (p 113). The significance of Sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, is highlighted as a way of reshaping the church's identity as a family and community sent to witness to Christ's victory over the fallen powers.

Chapter 6 discusses "ways in which Christians can confront the consumer church and culture with the Ark in hopes of reconciling those different ethnic and economic backgrounds" (p 133). The author challenges Christians to shake off their commodity and church growth orientation and to adopt a communal and co-missional model that focuses on building

qualitative relationships and partnerships to help break down divisions among people. Christians are called: "to relocate, reconcile and redistribute the Lord's bounty" (p 137). The building of a beloved community through the "rebinding work of shalom" is the goal.

Metzger concludes this seminal work with a reference to the eschatological banquet, a banquet to which everyone is invited without discrimination and at which all are welcome. What a vision in the presence of the powers of consumerism and class divisions! This highly prophetic book is recommended to theologians from all persuasions, theological students, lay leaders and all Christians who can read and understand English. Its wealth should be distributed to all the people of God.



Nel, G 2007 – *The compassionate leader: Leading like Jesus did. How treating people properly can give you the corporate edge*

ISBN: 978 0 620 39849 7, Pages i-150. Price: Unknown

Reviewer: Rev Frikkie J Labuschagne (Parys)

Dr Gerhard Nel is a minister in the Netherdutch Reformed Church in Arcadia, Pretoria. He obtained his doctorate in New Testament Studies from the University of Pretoria on the theme of Jesus' ethics.

The *Compassionate leader* follows a dialogical approach. The primary purpose of this book is to enable leaders or potential leaders to apply the Christian ethics outlined in their work environment.

"*Leading like Jesus did*" sets the tone for the author's approach to a highly debatable subject: leadership. Effective leadership happens when you as a leader have the ability to lead with compassion and to address the needs of people.

Potential readers are:

- Ministers
- Leaders and potential leaders
- Business people
- Members of congregations

The compassionate leader is a book on Jesus and a new way of leading people. Christians in the business world should apply a new ethics if they want to make a difference and lead people effectively.

"Research shows that spirituality in the work place enhances individual creativity, honesty and trust within companies. Employees also experience a sense of spiritual fulfillment and they are more committed to the organization's targets, goals and aspirations." Based on the life and work of Jesus, this book will help leaders to identify and associate with Jesus' leadership and "management style".

The following facets of Compassionate Leadership are addressed in this very practical and principle-based book: