

Presbyterian Church in America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and other conservative Presbyterian denominations. For example, the Presbyterian quarrel about the teaching elder (the minister), and the ruling elder counting as one office is discussed at some length (chapter 14), as is “B. B. Warfield’s Blunder” teaching that the soul can be in direct contact with God (chapter 15). Much of Meyers’ argumentation is aimed at fellow conservative Presbyterians who forbid litanies, ministerial vestments, weekly communion, children at the Lord’s Supper, and all other liturgical, ceremonial elements in worship.

However, it would be regrettable if the book were limited to that audience. Meyers is on target in lamenting that ministers in various denominations do not have sufficient knowledge of either the history of theology or of worship. His book can aid ministers and many other readers to overcome such deficiency.

—Harry Boonstra

Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor’s Own Family by Ronald W. Richardson. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. Pages unknown. Price unknown.

The book is a valuable addition to the growing array of literature on family systems theory (also called the Bowen Theory). While Roberta Gilbert’s *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking about Human Interactions* (Chronimed, 1992) could be considered a good primer on the Bowen Theory, Richardson’s volume might be considered a third or fourth read for someone who is not only fascinated by the subject but who is also beginning to utilize the theory in working on self and, perhaps, with others.

Richardson’s book provides a helpful corrective to a technique approach to pastoral leadership. It emphasizes the need for pastors to do their own extensive “family of origin work” before attempting to utilize family systems theory to understand and work within the congregation. His expansive treatment of how the Bowen Theory can inform a pastor’s move toward greater self-differentiation will well serve the pastor who embarks on the journey of understanding “self-in-community.” Pastors on such a journey will find this book to be a helpful reference guide in navigating the idiosyncrasies of differentiating self within their own family of origins. Additionally, as Richardson emphasizes, when pastors move toward reconnecting with their own families, they will likely be developing a more mature presence within the congregations they serve.

Richardson supplies a high degree of “if this, then this” detail, that provides a helpful sorting out of the various trees for those who already understand the contours of the forest. Readers will find this helpful if they are personally engaged both theoretically and personally with the Bowen Theory. Of particular value is Richardson’s wisdom in strongly suggesting that pastors find a trained coach who can help them navigate the complexity of family and congregational relationships. Doing this work without such a coach seems fraught

with the likelihood of premature conclusions and ruts of thought that could limit rather than expand the pastor's self-understanding and healthy functioning.

My positive appraisal of this book is primarily directed at the first ten chapters and chapter 14. I am less appreciative of chapters 11 through 13. In these chapters, Richardson outlines a strategy for pastors to become family systems coaches for select parishioners. He suggests that this can happen either with individuals or with small groups. Generally speaking, I think this is unwise. Although being a family systems coach is decidedly different from engaging in an extensive counseling ministry, the hazards to the pastor and the congregation are sufficiently similar. Richardson acknowledges that this work might best be done by a minister of pastoral care in a large congregation that, I suspect, is a relatively small set of the pastors working in congregations today.

Richardson's repeated list of warnings around prematurely attempting this sort of work would suggest that he is aware of the potential difficulties. On page 125, he articulates minimum expectations as a final warning for anyone intent on becoming a coach within their own congregation. "We must not attempt to be a coach with parishioners in our congregations unless:

- we have engaged in a serious and lengthy study of family systems theory concepts and can make use of the concepts with a relatively high degree of sophistication;
- we have had at least four or five years of working with the concepts in relationship to our own family of origin and have made significant progress in addressing our own unresolved family attachments;
- we have a regular, ongoing relationship with a family systems theory consultant with whom we can discuss not only our own family work but issues related to being a coach within our congregation."

This level of warning to pastors about prematurely attempting to coach parishioners suggests that the potential harm may well outweigh the potential benefits.

As I read this book, I found myself asking why this book targets pastors and not leaders in general. Apart from the chapters on becoming a coach for congregants, the conceptual prism and challenge to personal work seem also to fit other leaders in congregations as well as leaders of organizations in general. So, why the focus on pastors? It strikes me that there is a lot of attention on pastors in the North American church and in the CRCNA. For this I am grateful. On one level, the focus seems strategic. On another level, focusing the lens of the Bowen Theory on congregations or denominations, I wonder if this attention to pastors' health, perseverance, and even excellence is a red flag, alerting us to the possibility that the church may be concentrating its own growing anxiety onto its pastors. One principle of family systems theory is that we need to look at the whole system and not just one part. Too much focus on pastors may mean too little focus on others. In his earlier book, *Creating a Healthier Church*, Richardson writes for "anyone who has any kind of leadership or decision-mak-

ing role in the church. . . . committee members, administrators, church school teachers, secretaries, librarians, choir directors, organists, and Sunday morning ‘greeters’ and ushers” (20). *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* is good sense for all of these church leaders as well as leaders of other organizations. So, why limit it to pastors?

There is much that is excellent and praiseworthy in this book. If read with the above warnings, it could be helpful to pastors and many others who have the ears to hear.

—Norm Thomasma

Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship, Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice edited by Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Ligion Duncan III. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003. Pp. xvii + 516. \$29.99 cloth.

The names of the contributors to this book read like a Who’s Who list from the membership of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. This is appropriate: The volume is a festschrift in honor of the Alliance’s founder, James Montgomery Boice. As noted in the foreword, Dr. Boice, a prominent evangelical leader, scholar, and preacher, displayed some admirable passions in his life, not the least of which was a desire for godly worship in the church’s life. Although the tendency these days might be to avoid yet another book on the practice and theology of worship, *Give Praise to God* communicates something unique and needed.

This work is divided into four main parts, each subdivided into anywhere from three to seven chapters, for a total of eighteen chapters. Laying a solid foundation, much of part 1, “The Bible and Worship,” seeks to make the case for and defend the regulative principle of worship, found, among other places, in Heidelberg Catechism Q. & A. 96. As chapter 1 notes, this basic worship principle should be obvious given that Scripture is our final authority in faith and life, but it does need saying today that the Bible is to regulate our corporate worship, just as it does our entire life. In light of those who deem the regulative principle outmoded or restrictive, chapter 3 makes the accurate point that it actually promotes Christian freedom, because the alternative is that a local church or worship leader is imposing on God’s people what can or cannot happen in worship. Closing out part 1 is chapter 4, giving another solid biblical-theological foundation for worship by understanding it as a means of grace. This idea not only gives focus to exactly why corporate worship is so crucial in the life of the church, but it also highlights the work of the Holy Spirit, because he is the one acting in a special way in worship by producing faith in the worshippers’ hearts. A greater emphasis in this chapter on the specific idea of preaching as a means of grace would have been appropriate.

Part 2, “Elements of Biblical Worship,” brings us to chapters on specific topics such as reading and praying the Bible, baptism, the Lord’s Supper,