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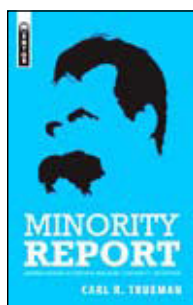
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American Evangelicals would be an excellent textbook for classes in American religious history or introductory Christianity courses. Pastors and other church leaders will find the book to be a useful resource for understanding the basic history of evangelical distinctives and debates. The book is popularly written, so it would also be appropriate for local church reading groups, Sunday School classes, or a short Christian education course.

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Carl R. Trueman. *Minority Report: Unpopular Thoughts on Everything from Ancient Christianity to Zen-Calvinism*. Scotland: Mentor, 2008. 221 pp. \$17.99.



Does Carl Trueman ever write anything that is boring? He definitely does not write like typical professors of historical theology and church history (no offense to those many fine history professors!). This second volume of his collected essays follows in the train of his first: *Wages of Spin: Critical Writings on Historic and Contemporary Evangelicalism* (Scotland: Mentor, 2004). Trueman's combination of his first-class intellect, British sensibilities, Westminster Seminary tradition, and cultural preferences is an unusual package that is provocative, humorous, wry, clever, engaging, and thought-provoking. He writes with a wit and verve that is delightful and entertaining.

This volume collects twenty of Trueman's essays, many of which are short articles published at www.reformation21.org. They address the following themes (my categories, not Trueman's):

1. Defending the discipline of church history: "Rage, Rage Against the Dying of the Light," a revision of Trueman's inaugural lecture as professor at Westminster Theological Seminary in 2005, is a manifesto for teaching historical theology and church history in seminary, particularly against the challenge of postmodernism. "Breeding Ferrets on Watership Down" is a shorter apologetic for teaching history. "Leadership, Holy Men, and Lessons from Augustine" (which also fits in the next paragraph) demonstrates the value of knowing the church fathers by using them to expose problems with evangelical leaders in light of Ted Haggard's scandal.

2. Critiquing American evangelicalism: "Uneasy Consciences and Critical Minds" draws self-critiquing insights from Carl F. H. Henry and Edward Said. "It Ain't Over Till the Fat Lady Sings" respectfully and strongly disagrees with Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom's *Is the Reformation Over?* "A Good Creed Seldom Goes Unpunished" tactfully defends the value of creeds for the church. "Is the Devil Really in the Details?" and "Thoughts on the Return to Rome of Professor Beckwith" critically reflect on the high-profile conversions of Joshua Hochschild and Francis Beckwith from evangelicalism to Roman Catholicism. "Escaping Vanity Fair: A Word of Encouragement from Nietzsche" challenges evangelicals to critique themselves.

3. Critiquing culture (esp. American culture): "The Age of Apathy" analyzes our apathetic culture and demonstrates how that mindset destroys Christian living. "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues" reflects on how quickly our culture has openly accepted homosexuality. "American Idolatry" pokes fun at and draws insightful lessons from the popular TV show *American Idol*. "The Theater of the

Absurd” explains why Trueman blogs with a facetious edge. “Death, the Final Boundary,” which pastors could profitably utilize in funeral sermons, considers how dramatically sex and death have switched places as cultural taboos in Western society. “A Dangerous Gift for My Wife” hilariously reflects on women’s anti-ageing products and the cult of youth.

4. Critiquing human nature: “The Banality of Evil: From Eichmann to the iPod Generation” agrees with Hannah Arendt’s account of Adolf Eichmann’s trial as a Nazi war criminal: evil is banal. “Zen-Calvinism and the Art of Motorvehicle Replacement” is an apologetic for “Zen-Calvinism,” a label for shock effect that refers to Trueman’s practical Calvinism.

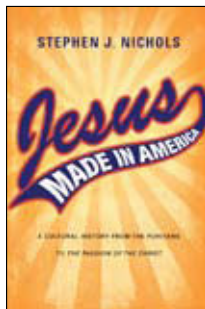
5. Critiquing poor theology: “Beyond the Limitations of Chick Lit” notes similarities and differences between Protestants and Catholics. “Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing Book” is a masterful, hilarious-yet-sobering parody of a Sherlock Holmes case; the problem that this case analyzes is the disappearance of John’s gospel among so-called evangelical scholars writing about Christ.

6. Promoting the use of Psalms in church worship: “Where Is Authenticity to Be Found?” persuasively expands on his previous proposal (“What Do Miserable Christians Sing?”) to recover Psalm-singing; like our singing, our teaching of theology must express God’s truth in the multiple literary ways that God has revealed it. “Zen-Calvinism and the Art of Motorvehicle Replacement” likewise extols the use of Psalms in worship.

The circulation of these essays in this accessible format will no doubt incite and infuriate even more readers, many of whom will let Trueman know this in rather rude ways. Thankfully, this will not deter him, for he marvels, “Christians do write the most spectacularly humorless hate-mail; what motivates people to waste their time in this way is a mystery to me, but such letters and e-mails do perversely encourage me to continue rattling cages” (p. 10).

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Stephen J. Nichols. *Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to the Passion of the Christ*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2008. 237 pp. \$24.95.



While driving to my office at Southern Seminary the other day, three bumper stickers caught my attention. One was adorned with a peace symbol and read, “Jesus was a liberal.” A second was black with green letters made to look like spray-painted graffiti and read, “Jesus is my homeboy.” A third obviously was adorned with the Promise Keepers logo and read, “Real Men Love Jesus.” Three vehicles, three bumper stickers, and three different messages about Jesus.

It seems that Jesus is on the minds of an unprecedented number of people in the West today, and Stephen Nichols, research professor of Christianity and Culture at Lancaster Bible College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, takes note of the trend of popularizing our Lord and traces its development in *Jesus Made in America*.