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Book Reviews

Beeby, H D, *Hosea: Grace Abounding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, 196 pp, paper, \$12.95) reviewed by Brian K. Heldt

Dr H D Beeby lived in China and Taiwan from 1946-1972, and was Professor of Old Testament in Tainan Theological College in Taiwan for much of that time. More recently he lectured at Selly Oaks Colleges in England. His thorough linguistic knowledge of the Old Testament, practical understanding of Oriental culture, and colorful mastery of the English language combine to produce this excellent work on the prophecy of Hosea.

Simplified in structure, *Hosea: Grace Abounding* offers a pointed theological interpretation of the Hebrew text, a fitting tribute to the aim of the *ITC* series: "To Keep the Old Testament Alive in the Church." When the translation of a particular passage is difficult, the RSV is consistently used as the English version of authority. A brief bibliography at the conclusion of the work is noticeably lacking in theologically conservative authors.

A weakness in the book is Dr Beeby's acceptance of textual revisions ascribed to redactors after the eighth century BCE. This questioning of authorship extends to very few passages, and the author most often argues for an eighth century Hosean authorship.

The work exhibits a refreshing scholarly concern to interpret the prophecy within its historical and cultural context. On occasions the author briefly regresses to succinctly explain the import of a particular city, area, or custom.

Dr Beeby observes a definite theme throughout the prophecy of Hosea, noted in the subtitle of the commentary. The grace of God chose Israel from among the nations. Having experienced that grace in the power, fatherly care, and protection of Jehovah, Israel wandered from that grace to serve vain idols. God would now become her enemy, chastising her with Assyrian military rapacity. His purpose is to lead Israel to a personal, vital knowledge of His grace. This "U-turn" from grace to estrangement to grace is seen to be the central theme of the commentary.

This volume will find its greatest value to pastors, educators, and students who have a general familiarity with the postulates of liberal higher

criticism of the Old Testament. It is especially valuable for its clear exposition of the theme of Hosea's prophecy in a manner which is practical and challenging.

A brief overview of the manner in which this theme unfolds is now given according to the divisions of Dr Beeby's work.

Introduction. The introduction deals with the religious situation of Hosea's day, seen in the imagery of Hosea and his prostitute wife (picturing God and "prostituting" Israel). The prophecy is a polemic against Israel's syncretistic alliance with the fertility cult of Baal.

Section one: Setting the stage (1:1-3:5). Professor Beeby believes Gomer was a prostitute when Hosea married her by the command of God. Especially thought provoking are the questions which Mr Beeby asks at the end of section one, chapter one, regarding the contextualization of the gospel in various cultures around the world.

As part one (1:1-2:1) of this section describes the background information necessary to understand the social situation between Gomer and Hosea, so part two (2:2-23) describes a divorce court proceeding in the city gate which ends with the reuniting of the estranged couple. Dr Beeby's analysis of the internal thought as God deals with unfaithful Israel in chapter two is valuable in its contribution to a clear understanding of the prophecy.

Chapter three, with its introduction of the theme of God's love, is given a prominent place in the exegesis of the book. From it the message of the rest of the book flows, and into it flows the theological/historical ramifications of chapters one and two.

Section two: No knowledge of God, the present state (4:1-7:16). Chapters 4-14 of Hosea do not fall easily into a pattern of division. Nonetheless, Dr Beeby divides them along the general theme of the knowledge of God reflecting its absence (chapters 4-7), its revelation and subsequent spurning (chapters 8-11), and its final acceptance (chapters 12-14).

Central to an understanding of chapters 4-7 is God's lament in 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." The priesthood had failed to vitally exemplify a knowledge of God. The misuse of religious ritual clouded the knowledge of God. Weak civil leadership led to apathy toward the knowledge of God among the people. Is there an application to the Church today? Indeed! She must live her theology with care. If not, "the bread of life can become a stone, and the water of life poison. Where the Church leads astray, or the Way becomes a wall, and penultimates become ultimate, then the Church has brought rejection upon itself, and darkness upon those to whom it is sent." (p 59)

A superficial return to God is unacceptable and is immediately recognized by Him. God desires heart-felt repentance accompanied by righteousness. He seeks true love based on full experiential knowledge. Such love comes only from a repentant, forgiven heart. Only then will He restore the accompanying blessings of fellowship.

Israel was to be the weapon of God as He revealed Himself to the nations. Instead she had become the enemy of the One who would so use her. She must be cast away.

Section three: The spiritual history of Israel (8:1-11:11). The general theme of these chapters is a recounting of the spiritual history of Israel. She had rejected Jehovah and had made empty gods for herself. She had led a morally indistinct and spiritually syncretistic existence. Though life seemed to go on as usual, God was remembering.

In chapter nine, with a religious festival as the literary backdrop, Hosea takes strong exception to Israel's idolatry. He was summarily considered a fool. Israel's foundational problem was her dual heart. The form, emotion, and assumed direction of her worship were sound. It was the theology (the necessary basis for a vital fellowship with God) of her worship which was in error.

Professor Beeby identifies chapter 11 as the watershed of the book of Hosea. "It is the clearest statement of Hosea's central theme and as such provides a clue to the interpretation of the rest of the book." (p 140)

Section four: The knowledge of God revitalized (11:12-12:14). Chapter 12 compares Israel/Judah of the eighth century BCE with their patriarch progenitor, Jacob. Their political and spiritual personalities also reflected consistent deceit. God, however, had not changed. Sin remained an abhorrence to Him, and He who was once their loving protector had now become their enemy.

The contrast between 13:16 and 14:1 could not have been more starkly written. Hosea therein moves from pregnancies violently terminated through war to an impassioned plea by God to Israel, asking her to return. She has keenly experienced God's initial grace, fallen to the depths of depravity in rejecting that same grace, and is now pictured as returning to her God in true repentance and experiencing the blessings of vitally knowing Him.

Henry, Carl F H, *Twilight of a Great Civilization: The Drift Toward Neo-Paganism* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988, 192 pp, hard, \$12.95) reviewed by Dr E R Jordan

Dr. Henry sees a drift toward Neo-Paganism and tries to cry out against it. The problem with this book is that the author either has no definite solution or has solutions that are terribly unclear. Dr. Henry desires to hold to inerrancy but his solution involves a type of syncretism between Fundamentalism, New-Evangelicalism, and the Evangelicals.

One must empathize with the New Evangelical who when seeing the drift of New Evangelicalism into Liberalism and Modernism, wants to stop the drift but is unwilling to correct it doctrinally. The author seems to be seeking a halfway home composed of a utopian sort of social culture.

This book is tremendously confusing. The average pastor will have a difficult time comprehending the lack of a logical order and the cloudy conclusion. I do not recommend this book because it serves no purpose and gives no solutions.

House, H Wayne, ed, *Schooling Choices: An Examination of Private, Public, and Home Education* (Portland, OR; Multnomah Press, 1988, 260 pp, paper) reviewed by Steven L Smith

Dr. House, with the contributions of three noted authors, has edited a very practical work which presents the arguments for and against private, public, and home education. Each author presents a position in favor of one type of education while the other two give their brief response at the end of each section. The editor's purpose is not to draw a final conclusion as to which form of education is best for your child but it is "to simply provide you with helpful information and to challenge you to carefully weigh the alternatives." He stresses the importance of the parent's decision where their child will receive his education and he attempts to present fairly the arguments for all three choices so that parents can make a well-informed decision.

In the first section Dr. David Smith, a public school superintendent, gives a fair evaluation of public schools from an evangelical's point of view. He describes the benefits and notes the problems of a public education for a Christian. Dr. Smith addresses well the necessity of the parents' involvement in their child's public education. He admits that some public schools are not good but many still provide a good education with many Christian teachers.

Dr. Ken Gangel presents arguments for a Christian school in the second section. In an attempt to prove the importance of a Christian school education, he fills his writing with emotional words and Scriptures which point to the parent's responsibility. He lists the benefits of a Christian school but fails to warn parents of the obvious problems of a Christian school.

In part three Gregg Harris points to many unseen benefits of a home school. He lists various activities that a home school can provide for a child and excellent solutions to overcome the problems of a home school. This section is filled with valuable suggestions for the home schooling parents.

The greatest strength of this book is the choice of authors, as each author is an authority in his field. Also the response of each author to the other's positions is of great value. Greater emphasis should be placed on the fact that not all schools are alike. No one choice is right for all Christian parents but each must evaluate his own situation.

This book is a thought-provoking resource for the pastor and layman. It will be helpful in the guidance of parents in their choice of schooling for their child.

Jones, Bruce W, **Ministerial Leadership in a Managerial World** (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988, 237 pp, paper, \$6.95) reviewed by Evangelist Mike Sproul

"From 1984 to 1986 over 2 million new business ventures were started. Five years after their inception, however, 80 percent of them will fail. The Small Business Administration director said that the main reason for their failure would not be insufficient money -- it would be inadequate management." With this introductory paragraph the author allows the reader to understand that management will affect church growth.

He insists that, "management students who have top academic grades have not always passed the test of field experience. Why? Because leadership involves people skills, not just problem-solving skills." This could certainly be said of academically successful seminary students. His basic premise, which he develops quite well, is that ministers must learn management skills if they are going to lead. He means to mesh the knowledge of business management skills within the Christian concept of church growth.

The author rightly anticipates the first questions to be asked by his readers: "Does the secular world have any business teaching a Christian anything?" And, "What is the definition of Christian management?" He answers these questions and then moves on to style, structure, and dynamics of management.

The strengths of this book are numerous. One excellent aspect is the statistics he quotes. Another avenue of benefit is the section of endnotes at the end of each chapter. He liberally uses periodicals from both the secular and Christian world. The book is extremely readable which is also very important. He uses various forms of support from quotations to graphs in making this subject interesting.

A real strength is found in the first chapter in his defense of using management skills in the church. It seems that many church leaders shy away from this type of information because it is not "spiritual." They then flounder making many inter-personal mistakes which hurt their ministries. Another excellent section is found on pages 44-45 where he explains in graph form the difference between a leader's viewpoint and a manager's viewpoint.

Another interesting and useful section is found on pages 70-71 in which he compares a leader, an administrator, and a pastor. This is extremely useful to the pastor who wishes to address his own weaknesses and strengths. He also addresses authority and the use of benign, authoritarianism in the local church. He assures his readers (p 97) that many of the problems in the church are the result of the pastor lacking a clear vision of where he is going and how he wishes to get there.

He also explains how personality affects leadership style. This is extremely helpful to the pastor who is looking for an assistant. Instead of looking for someone like himself he would be wiser to look for someone to

complement his skills and personality (pp 98-103). He also accepts congregational government as the acceptable biblical model (p 124). An extremely practical section is his discussion of leadership in regard to breaking through church growth plateaus (pp 136-149).

This is an extremely practical book written to a minister to help him combine leadership with managerial skills. This book would be helpful to a pastor as well as be educational for a seminary student looking for a philosophy of management in the ministry.

Lutzer, Edwin W and DeVries, John F, **Satan's Evangelistic Strategy For This New Age** (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, \$12.95) reviewed by Dr John M Garber

The threefold purpose of this book as stated by the authors is (1) to equip the reader to identify New Age thought wherever it is found, (2) to identify the disguises of Satan who adapts his strategy to suit his audience, and (3) to emphasize that the believing church is the crossroad of opportunity to reach people who are asking questions that demonstrate the hunger for spiritual reality.

The book clearly shows that the strategy of the New Age is not new at all, but identical to what the author calls "The Four Spiritual Flaws," which are the lies of Satan to Eve, recorded in Genesis 3:4 and 5. These lies are expressed in four of the New Age doctrines of Pantheism, Reincarnation, Relativism, and Esotericism. In an effort to captivate the American mind with these pagan religions, the product of the New Age is made most appealing without making any moral demands, without confining itself to just one religion, without denying any pleasure, without waiting for God's help, and without requiring any personal humility.

Three chapters are given to show how the New Age has infiltrated the church, the home, and the government. In the church liberal theologians have no problems embracing moral values adjusted to social acceptance, joining hands with astrologers, channelers, and the meditations from the east. Those who believe there is a spark of divinity in every human, it is no great thing to make all creatures and creation divine, and ultimately conclude that we are all gods. In the home, TV, computer games, comic books which create characters with superhuman powers, the imaginations prepare a fertile soil for a "he-man" Christ or the masters of the universe instead of the God of the Bible. In the political arena, the desire for peace at any price is greatly influenced by the "enlightenment" of a world brotherhood. The end of national boundaries, a world economic system, efforts to rid the world of hunger, disarmament, elimination of nuclear weapons are all evidence of the New Age philosophy occupying people in high places of government. Animal rights, environmental issues and the like are all used to detract our leaders from their real obligations in government.

The psychology of self-worth, self-acceptance, and self-love with a subtle twist, make it appear as if psychology and Christianity are saying the same things. They teach that we do not need redemption and we are all right as we are, and simply need to accept ourselves thus. The "magic of believing" and the idea that we can force or manipulate God to act and give all of our desires, whether it be a new home or a Cadillac, is foreign to the Scriptures but taught by certain TV evangelists and those with a bent toward a charismatic type of emotional theology.

There is a chapter given to the opportunities for Christians in this day of great demonstrative spiritual hunger on the part of many people. We are warned of the hidden danger that Christians can fall into of overestimating Satan's power. We ought not to minimize the power of God nor should we thoughtlessly magnify the power of Satan. We are reminded that, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world," The authors point out that whenever there is a change in spiritual climate, Christians ought to be aware that there is the opening of opportunities to present the Gospel. With the change, there may well be the open receptivity to the Gospel, and if this opportunity is not met, false religions may enter in which cannot bring eternal satisfaction, but will simply make a wedge to move men farther from God. The entire book is well worth careful consideration, but especially the chapters entitled, "Infiltrating the Church" and "Infiltrating the Home," are of great significant importance to Bible-believing Christians.

Schimmels, Cliff, *Parents' Most-asked Questions About Kids and Schools* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989, 303 pp, cloth, \$17.95) reviewed by Andrew Counterman

Dr. Schimmels ventures out of the trenches into "no-man's land" to address the Christian child in the Public School. This book is obviously built on his earlier work, "How to Help Your Child Survive and Thrive in the Public School" (Ravell, 1982). The process and environment of public education is laid out, with a supportive bent, then critiqued, and given a method for success. The question/answer format allows multiple questions to be addressed within the sixteen "chapter concepts" of this book. There is clear movement toward forbearance; parents with teachers and teachers with parents. A clear plea is given to the dogmatic advocates of the Christian Day School movement to remember those in the church who do not have the alternative of Christian education offered to them.

The book offers a start in the solution process for the parents of children in the public school. From the start of the experience, a rule is set, "The first rule for the parent of any school-age child: NEVER, NEVER, NEVER send a child off to school, any school, unless you know the teacher, if not in the beginning, at least within a few days" (p 75). Not stopping at setting up rules, Schimmels goes on to demonstrate a method for implementing the process. Being strong on the parent/teacher team, there

is time spent on how to develop this team, in both the elementary and secondary levels. On page 65, he gives a list of five actions to "break into that seemingly austere beehive of activity of high school instruction" which is noted as the hardest area to penetrate because of multiple teachers in the educational instruction. The attitude of advocacy is seen in dealing with both the parents towards the teacher (p 71), and the teacher towards the parents (p 91).

Concern is developed in the lack of addressing alternative educational means. Although the book is not directed to "other" forms of education, the fact that other avenues exist ought to be given as a preferred direction (for the Christian). Also, the lack of separation from the world and things considered worldly stirs concern.

Because all pastors contact families with children in the public schools, this book would be a most helpful resource. The parent with a child in the public school or the parent contemplating sending a child to the public school would most surely benefit from this work. Its easy reading and practical application make this book useable to all.

Smith, Harold I, *Single and Feeling Good* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1987, 160 pp, paper) reviewed by Patrick J Casey

The book is classified under the heading "Self-Help/Psychology" and there is nothing on the cover to suggest that it is based upon biblical principles. Each section begins with a Bible verse but the verse given too often fails to apply to the discussion that follows. The section on "Singleness as a Mystery" begins with Ephesians 5:32, "This is a profound mystery -- but I am talking about Christ and the church." No further explanation is provided. Smith does not build his presentation from the Bible but seems to tack on verses here and there -- some fit, others do not. The Christian reader must discern what is biblical truth, what is opinion and what is mere rhetoric.

The author does offer keen insight into the needs and responsibilities of singles. He takes a realistic approach to singleness recognizing its frustrations. His first chapter, "Comments," addresses some practical issues -- wanting to be married and reasons for remaining single. He correctly states that "I do not become whole in marriage; I become whole in relationship to Jesus Christ." Unfortunately, the discussion of "traditional" views of singleness held by Paul, Origen, Augustine, Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin is of little benefit to a Christian single.

One of the book's greatest strengths is challenging singles with their personal responsibility to have right attitudes and right responses to their singleness. Smith correctly tells singles that they choose how to respond to their situation. Chapter three, "Issues," addresses a variety of topics important to every Christian single including "Intimacy," "Loneliness," and "Dating." His short section on "Intimacy" was helpful in revealing the great

difference between intimacy and sexual activity. However, this section lacked an explanation of how singles develop legitimate relationships that are "intimate" and avoid illegitimate relationships that are "intimate." Throughout this practical section he fails to relate biblical principles that are accurately understood and clearly stated.

The chapter on "Approaches" identified some problems that singles often experience. Here singleness is identified as an opportunity to be taken advantage of rather than a problem to be solved. The author identifies many well known men and women throughout history who made great contributions to society as single people and emphasizes that they did not see themselves as "half-persons." The section on "Attitudes" discusses three types of singles -- grippers, grabbers, and growers. Singles would do well to evaluate which category they fit into. The chapter on "Paul's Agenda" provides some valuable instruction in the sections "Learn to Be Content," "Learn to Devote to Doing Good" and "Learn to Control."

The good fruit in this book is often intermixed with faulty thinking. Of special concern is the author's incorrect understanding of the Bible. More than once he hypothetically suggests that "if the Bible writers were writing today," then maybe they would have said something totally different. The reader must also sift through inaccurate statements throughout the book. For example, on page 36 he says, "the concept of the nuclear family is not found in the New Testament." More than once the author misapplies Scripture. He paraphrases the words of Steven in Acts 7:49 this way, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit/my attitude about my singles." On page 94 he begins a section with "Who can find a virtuous [single]?" (Prov. 31:10a).

The reader periodically faces peripheral information that is unnecessary and unhelpful to the point the author is trying to make. In his section, "Surviving Dating" he states, "The old rules don't apply. It used to be that 'boy dates girl.' Now it can be man dates man/woman dates woman/or gay dates straight or any of the above tag-team for a night on the town." How such information helps the Christian single in his or her dating is unclear. The author's poor use of descriptive words also weakens his presentation (On page 63 he describes the commitment to falling in love rather than growing in love as "an abortion of the emotions.") The author's intentions are sincere but he has erred in some of his explanations.

One might question some opinions and logic expressed in the book. In a paragraph discussing how single adults must channel their sexual drives in ways that will not offend, it states, "Many single adults find masturbation a subtle sublimation of the sex drives. It rechannels the drive from illicit sexual intercourse." The author fails to connect this position with his statement only a few paragraphs later that "we will never be tempted above what we can endure and God will provide a means for you to cope with it" (referring to I Cor 10:13).

The book is not without merits. Important aspects of being single are addressed and needed challenges for singles are provided. The author shares some well-worded statements that pastors and singles would do well

to remember. Some sections provide practical insight into developing a healthy attitude toward being single. A pastor ministering to singles will find some of the material in this book helpful in understanding and challenging singles to use their singlehood. If Smith would reduce the valuable content into a pamphlet it would be required reading for all singles. As it stands, *Single and Feeling Good* demands too much sifting to be recommended reading for singles.

Smith, Harold I, *Singles Ask: Answers to Questions about Relationships and Sexual Issues* (Mpls, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988, 159 pp, paper) reviewed by John Liebner

Harold Smith, a divorced bachelor experienced in Single-Adult Ministry, answers 125 questions dealing with topics of interest to singles. Smith's categories cover those singles who are unmarried by choice, unmarried but waiting, divorced, single-parents, or widowed. This book is concise and frank, most of the questions are answered within a single page. The answers are practical rather than theological; thus it does not become engulfed in the theology behind certain "difficult" issues and does not give definitive solutions to every question. Attempting to give brief, concise answers often raises more questions and raising questions is not the purpose of the book. Some may feel that certain answers should be answered more dogmatically -- black and white -- right and wrong. Instead the author gives options and suggestions emphasizing the single adult's responsibility to have purpose behind all actions and not to take the "easy" route. "Know where you stand" would be a fitting addendum to each question. Single adults who are sincere about coming to grips with everyday conflicts both emotional and physical will find Smith's advice challenging and thought provoking.

Part 1: "Living and Working as a Single Adult" deals with topics from social drinking to sexual harassment. Suggestions are made for responding to the "after work" bar crowd, and advice is given for those considering dating someone at work as well as for dealing with unwanted advances. Parts 2 and 3: "What Women Ask about Men" and "What Men Ask about Women" examines topics ranging from developing meaningful relationships to dealing with being compared to a previous spouse. Parts 4 and 5 considers problems relative to "Coping with Divorce" and "Relationships with an Ex-Spouse" whether friendly or violent. Parts 6 and 7 consider topics ranging from "Friendships and Serious Relationships" to "When You're Looking for a Life Partner." Included are issues such as developing intimate friendships without marriage as a goal and through advertising. Parts 8-12 deal candidly and frankly with sex drives and celibacy. In Part 13: "What about Homosexuality," the author suggests that certain sins receive unfair, unjust bias and that persons overtaken in such sins are likely to be treated in the same manner. Not only is the Bible opposed to

homosexual promiscuity, but it is also opposed to "a lifestyle of gossip, adultery, or greed" (p 139). The final part considers AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

Questions Singles Ask will be challenging for the non-single who may be predisposed to assumptions and stereotypical views of single adults; for those who have packaged answers for all problems; and for those who suddenly put on the shoes of singleness.

Strommen, Merton P, **The Five Cries of Youth** (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988, 190 pp, hard, \$14.95) reviewed by David DeMasters

This book is actually a revision of a 1977 book by the same title updating the original findings with comparisons to statistics from 1977, 1980, and 1985. The information is drawn from studies of American youth in general and trend analyses of church youth which makes the findings very broad at most points. The two major groups of religious teens surveyed were Lutheran and Catholic, although many other denominational children were involved. The major thrust of the book is to report the findings of these surveys and to group them into five basic "cries" of youth with causes for each "cry" and basic responses to each.

The book is divided into seven basic sections. Each of these chapters details the findings of the various surveys and links how they lend themselves to his five cries. The first and last sections deal with understanding the cries and responding to the cries. The middle five chapters detail the information which translates into each of the five cries. He identifies these cries as: "The Cry of Self-Hatred" (chapter 2), "The Cry of Psychological Orphans" (chapter 3), "The Cry of Social Concern" (chapter 4), "The Cry of the Prejudiced" (chapter 5) and "The Cry of the Joyous" (chapter 7).

The strength of the book lies in its detail as to the responses to questions targeting basic needs in teenagers' lives. Each point that is made is supported with factual data to verify its findings. However, this became the major weakness of the book at times. Occasionally, sections had to be reread to make sense of the data which was reported. Particularly weak was the presentation of many of the charts. They could not be understood without an understanding of the preceding and following pages of the book, making them of little use outside of the context of the book.

The book seems to target those who are intimately involved with youth work. As a youth pastor I found many of the sections to be very enlightening. Of particular interest to me was the section discussing the Parent/Teen relationship found in chapter 5, "The Cry of the Prejudiced." While the book is beneficial, it is limited as to the scope of people who could use it. The book would best be used by those in a vocational relationship with teens. The average parent or Sunday school worker

would find it heavy reading at best. Those currently involved with teens in a vocational manner would be well advised to purchase this book and make it a part of their understanding of the teen culture. But the book would not be well received by the average layman in the local church.

Wilhoit, Jim and Ryken, Leland, **Effective Bible Teaching** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988, 256 pp, paper) reviewed by Patrick J Casey

Every local church should be concerned about the important topic this book addresses - effective Bible teaching. The structure and emphasis of the book are based upon the belief that "the key to better Bible teaching lies at the strategy/planning level. In fact many presentation problems . . . are the result of faulty planning." Although presentation is a vital ingredient to effective teaching, the authors believe that many teachers lose the "educational battle at the level of organization and content."

Convinced that effective teaching has characteristics that can be identified and learned, the authors deal with a variety of practical areas that can help Bible teachers improve. A clear understanding of the "real world" of Bible teaching is evident throughout the book. In the first section, the authors identify common problems that interfere with the effective teaching of God's Word. Fortunately, they also provide helpful suggestions to correct these problems. Their discussion of "Strategy and Planning" deals with such important issues as Inability to Come to Grips With a Biblical Text, Excessive Confidence in Published Materials, Overloading the Student, and Ineffectiveness in "Bridging the Gap."

It was refreshing to see an emphasis on the importance of the teacher and the act of teaching in contrast to "teacher-proof" curriculums that are so common today. The authors must be commended for addressing the teacher's need to develop Bible study skills so they can understand the passages they teach. Such topics as *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* and *Discovering the Unity in Biblical Passages* deal with issues that are often overlooked by the Bible teachers in our churches.

The third section of the book focuses on "The Bible We Teach." Here the authors discuss the different types of literature including *Stories of the Bible*, *Teaching the Poetry of the Bible*, and *Teaching Other Genres of the Bible*. One might not agree with all the details given and the discussions are limited (because of the general nature of the book). Nonetheless, the majority of information is thought-provoking and helps the Bible teacher have some hermeneutical ground rules to follow when approaching different types of literature within the biblical record.

This book is "required" reading for every pastor who is serious about the local church's responsibility to be involved in *effective* Bible teaching. The layman who wants to improve his ability to teach God's Word will also benefit from this publication.