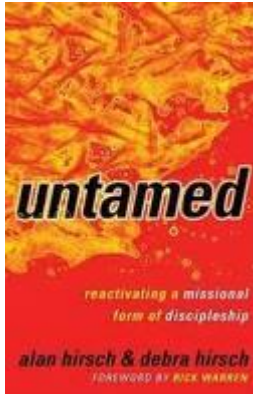


Mission Possible Ezine
Month ending October 31st 2010

BIG FOCUS ON BOOKS THIS MONTH



Untamed: reactivating a missional form of discipleship by Alan and Debra Hirsch.

This book came out early this year. The reviews are positive...and not so positive. That doesn't mean it shouldn't be considered for reading, but rather than some don't find it as fresh a message as others.

[Matt Tebbe](#) in *Christianity Today* is very impressed with it. He notes that the book is *organized into four sections: Untaming God, Untaming Culture, Untaming Self, and Untaming Mission. Their model of missional discipleship is rooted in a proper reorientation in the Triune God, which includes uncovering the ways we've domesticated God the*

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to comport to our own needs and desires. [Halo Faire from Canada](#) says the opening chapters are good and thought-provoking, but that the Hirschs then give a personal view of discipleship based on their own experiences rather than one that is based on what Christ said discipleship is. *Plainly it speaks differently to different people and my suspicion is that like all of Hirsch's books there will be valuable things in it.*

Baker Books February, 2010



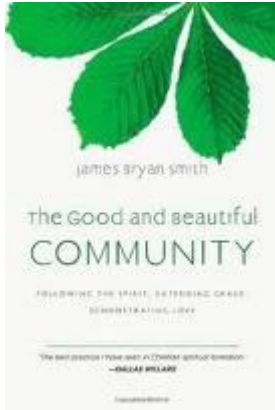
Most of the books we include here are related to mission or leadership, but this time I want to add in Jonny Baker's new book, [Curating Worship](#).

This is the product description: Curation is a term usually used in the art world for the role of imagining and overseeing an exhibition or art experience. However the word is now being adopted by people in alternative worship, as it affords a very different and inventive way of thinking about how to lead a service or praise event. Rather than simply presiding over liturgy or fronting a band, curation involves negotiating between institutions and artists and making do with what is to hand to create something brilliant. The hope is that moments of epiphany will be experienced as God is invited to be and

breathe in the space, and people make connections with their own lives and stories.

Curating Worship is in two parts. The first considers the kind of thinking, skills and disciplines involved in good curation. The second consists of in-depth interviews, which tease out from people who have curated amazing worship experiences around the world, the ideas and theories behind their approaches and the practical processes involved.

For some background about how the book came into being [read a post from Jonny's blog](#) and [also this one](#).



[The Apprentice Series](#) is a collection written by James Bryan Smith and published by [InterVarsity Press](#). There are three titles in the series: **The Good and Beautiful God, The Good and Beautiful Life, and The Good and Beautiful Community**. This last title has just been released. According to IVP, “The series is designed to guide readers in an apprenticeship with Jesus recognizing that we follow Jesus to become like Jesus.”

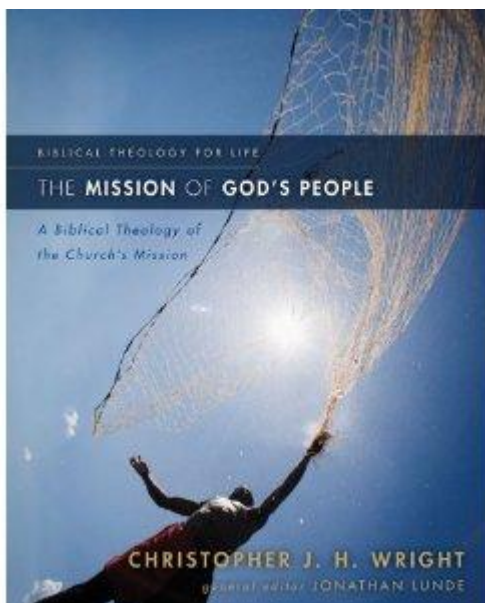
“*The Apprentice Series* is based on a simple structure for producing change...The first “element” is actually the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that enlivens all our efforts to follow Christ—including the other three components of transformation.

“The second area where change can happen is in transforming our narratives. Narratives are the stories we live by that give our life purpose and explanation. Often our narratives are at work in our lives without our knowing it. We have narratives about God, our self, others and so forth. Many of us have narratives about God that do not match the narratives that Jesus revealed. We cannot change our behaviour until we change the narratives that guide us.

“One way to change our narratives is to engage in soul-training exercises, which makes up the third component of transformation. Each chapter includes a practice that helps the reader open to the Holy Spirit and begin replacing false narratives with the true narratives of Jesus. The exercises are often simple and usually counter-cultural. For example, the first exercise of *The Good and Beautiful God* is sleep, because when we sleep we are relinquishing our perceived control of life and inviting God to be God.

“The fourth and final component of transformation is community. We cannot change on our own, we need other people on the journey with us to encourage and challenge us.”

There’s a [good review of the most recent book](#) here, as well as an overview of what’s in the second book.

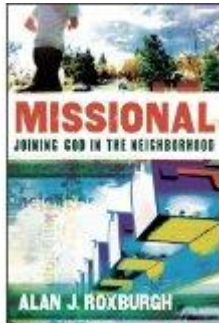


The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission (Biblical Theology for Life) by Christopher J H Wright.

Howard Marshall writes: This is the first volume in a new series on biblical theology. It is extraordinarily readable, written by a preacher who knows how to communicate simply, clearly, and fascinatingly. It is refreshingly adventurous, as it explores the theme of mission in biblical passages where you might not have expected to find it. It is excitingly controversial in discussing such matters as the relation of care for the planet to evangelism, but always in an irenic manner. It is also remarkably practical, being concerned with

the theological underpinning for the church's action in the world. It is surprisingly relevant, concerned as it is with the central story of God's mission to the world as the template that must shape the work of the church. It is outstandingly down-to-earth in showing how our daily lives must be outworkings of our missionary calling. It is thus eminently commendable both for its own sake and also as setting a high standard for the other volumes to follow in this series.

Published by Zondervan Sept, 2010

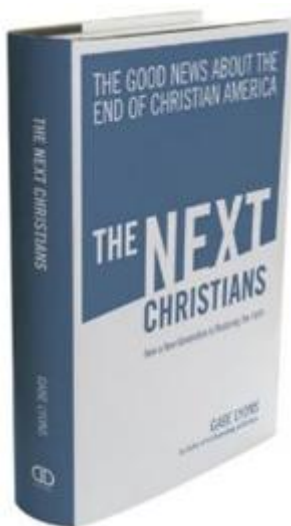


Missional: Joining God in the Neighbourhood

“...The burgeoning missional church movement is a sign that believers are increasingly feeling the call to impact their communities, which is a good thing. But, says Alan J. Roxburgh, these conversations still prioritize church success over mission--how can being missional grow my church? But to focus on such questions misses the point.”

*In **Missional**, Roxburgh calls Christians to re-enter their neighbourhoods and communities to discover what the Spirit is doing there--to start with God's mission. He then encourages readers to shape their local churches around that mission. With inspiring true stories and a solid biblical base, **Missional** is a book that will change lives and communities as its message is lived out...*”

This book won't be out till around March 2011 so perhaps make a note in your diary to check it out then.



The Next Christians: the Good News about the end of Christian America, by Gabe Lyons (author of Un-Christian)

Lyons sincerely believes that the church is on the cusp of a remarkable transformation, not unlike the era of the Reformation. But to seize the day he offers a word to the wise: the next Christians must emphasize the whole Gospel and stay committed to keeping it first. Our ongoing temptation is to get sidetracked by secondary issues such as theories of cultural engagement, methodologies of outreach, models of doing church and even environmental stewardship. These are not unimportant but they must be subsumed under the larger and more potent agenda of living out the Gospel by the power of the Spirit. As Lyons so astutely notes, ‘where Christians restore, people get saved.’ (p. 193) – from a book review by [Scott Wenig](#).

Doubleday, Oct 2010

LEADERSHIP

The following four points come from Tony Schwartz in an article entitled: [The Four Capacities Every Great Leader Needs \(and Very Few Have\)](#):

1. Great leaders recognize strengths in us that we don't always yet fully see in ourselves.
2. Rather than simply trying to get more out of us, great leaders seek to understand and meet our needs, but most of all understand the compelling mission beyond our immediate self-interest, or theirs.
3. Great leaders take the time to clearly define what success looks like, and then empower and trust us to figure out the best way to achieve it.
4. The best of all leaders — a tiny fraction — have the capacity to embrace their own opposites, most notably vulnerability alongside strength, and confidence balanced by humility.

Give me a text explanation and I can go at my pace; give me a video explanation and I'm chained to your pace -
Alan Jacobs

*In article entitled, **Make Meetings Work: Fight the PowerPoint**, Robert C. Pozen and Justin Fox make some useful comments about running meetings that might well apply to some of those long-winded meetings all of us attend...*



First, almost every meeting can be completed in one hour or at most 90 minutes. At 90 minutes, people turn off — they get tired and they stop paying attention. If you try to extend a meeting beyond 90 minutes, the diminishing returns are staggering.

Second, you should have meeting materials delivered the day before or the night before by email. All materials should have a one-page executive summary, and the assumption should be that everyone has read at least the summary before the meeting starts.

You can read the [rest of the article here](#).

[photo: [Antonio Furno](#)]

As of today, Jason Goroncy from Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership has just posted the 14th episode in an ongoing series called, [On the Cost and Grace of Parish Ministry](#).

I've been keeping up with these since they began, but wasn't sure how many were to come, so haven't notified the readers of this blog until now. This is a superb series of articles on all manner of things related to the series title: today's focuses on suffering, and in spite of its length (it ran out to 14 pages as a word document, including the pictures) is worth sitting down and reading carefully.



At the bottom of the latest post are links to all the other posts. Take an hour or so out of your time and read these.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Mental Health Foundation announced the online release of *“Down on the farm: Depression and mental health in the rural south”* earlier this month.

The 16-page supplement was produced by 2009 New Zealand Mental Health Media Grant recipient **Yvonne O’Hara**. Originally published on 29 September and 6 October in the *Southern Rural Life* and *Courier Country* respectively to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Week, the resource has now been made available for download via the [Mental Health Foundation’s website](#).

“Down on the farm: Depression and mental health in the rural south” features articles on stress management, financial planning, depression and grief as well as providing information on support services available.

The aim of the publication is to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues and to encourage the traditionally stoical and staunch farming community to talk about their problems, and to seek help if necessary.



Despite being specifically aimed at the communities around Southland, Otago and Canterbury, *“Down on the farm: Depression and mental health in the rural south”* offers valuable advice to anyone within the farming community.

(Incidentally, the cover picture is superb. The portrait, entitled **Killing Time**, is by Cromwell artist **Deidre Copeland**, with permission from the subject's family. More of her artwork can be viewed [on her website](#).)

MISSION

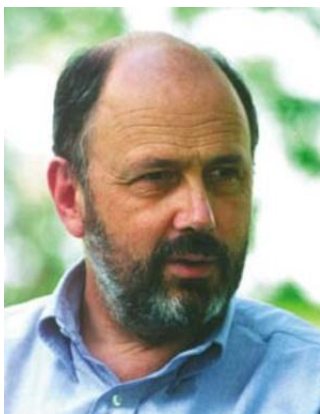
Although he was Bishop of Durham in the Church of England for seven years, N.T. Wright doesn't think about the church in terms of institutions. He thinks in terms of community.

"The institution is like the scaffolding that you need to be working on the building," Wright said. "The scaffolding isn't the reality."

The General Synod, the Church of England's legislative body, for example, is basically like plumbing, Wright said: "When you go into a friend's house, you don't expect to see the plumbing, but you need to know that it's working, because if it's not, fairly soon there'll be a bad smell in the house."

That is, the church's institutions have to work well, or things can go wrong. People can get hurt, Wright said. Church leaders may sometimes feel like they're working on scaffolding all day rather than living in the house, but "somebody has got to do that stuff so that the mission of the church can go forward." *From an interview on the [Faith and Leadership site](#).*

Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.—Oscar Wilde



"N. T. Wright says that 'a mission-shaped church must have its mission shaped by hope; that the genuine Christian hope, rooted in Jesus' resurrection, is the hope for God's renewal of all things, for his overcoming of corruption, decay, and death, for his filling of the whole cosmos with his love and grace, his power and glory.' Roots in the future, roots in the resurrection, roots in the eternal victory of Jesus, roots that are firmly planted in eternal life, roots that nourish the trunk and branches, and ultimately produce the fruit that draws others into the story. Wright concludes, 'To be truly effective in this kind of mission, one must be genuinely and cheerfully rooted in God's renewal.' We have a real reason to cheer. The more we know the story, the more we rejoice.'"

From "The Good and Beautiful Community," (2010) James Bryan Smith

Christopher Wright, the author of **The Mission of God: unlocking the Bible's grand narrative** (IVP 2006) says that when it comes to saying 'missional church' the first word is a redundancy, like saying, "female woman". "Every church should be missional. It is not an option. You cannot have a church that is not committed to mission," adds Andrew Jones (known from his [blog](#) – which seems to be functioning again after a hiatus - as *Tall Skinny Kiwi*).

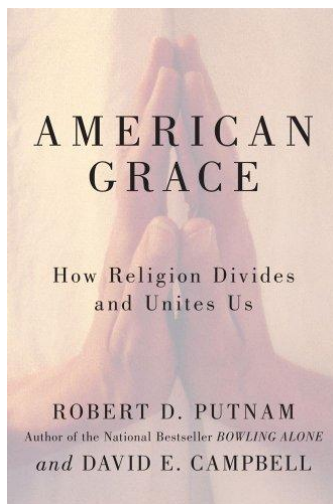
Never confuse a single defeat
with a final defeat.
~ F. Scott Fitzgerald

SOCIETY

The following brief review was sent to me by Peter Lineham, and comes from the magazine, *Sightings*, 18th Oct, 2010. It's also worth checking out [Stanley Hauerwas' comments](#) on the Brits or the Americans in terms of their faith, in relation to this review.

American Grace

- [Martin E. Marty](#)

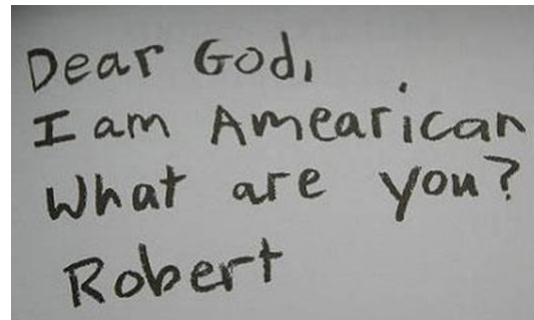


American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us by Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell is the religion-and-culture blockbuster book this season. Awaited for several years, especially given Putnam's prominence since he patented the concept captured in his earlier book *Bowling Alone*, it is being reviewed and written about as few publications in this field could ever hope to be. It would be futile for me to write a book review or detail the contents of the book. It is fat, full of good stories, and crammed with data: the authors seem never to have found an opinion poll they didn't like, and readers will be well served by the array of graphs which can be put to work in ways that relate to their interests, prejudice, and hopes.

Instead of being comprehensive (at one-page length!), I will pick out one feature which inspires curiosity and debate. It relates to the sub-title. Reviewer Wilfred M. McClay in the *Wall Street Journal* lifted it up in these lines: "How Religion Divides and Unites Us." He asks, "Which is it?" At the beginning of the book the authors write—and who could disagree?—that "Americans have become polarized along religious lines." Near the end, they write that we are "not so divided after all," and "America's grace" overcomes religious divisions. Again, McClay writes, "How can both of these things be true?"

The data in *American Grace* and what one's eyes and ears reveal and record if one pays attention to mass communication in all its forms or to the talk and manners of neighbours is that the answer to the question "Which is it?" is "Both." "How can both of these things be true?" Not easily, says the voice of logic; relatively easily, answers the observer of experience. In this case as in so many others, the words of an underground philosopher of yore, Emmett Grogan, is as appropriate as it is frustrating: "Anything anybody can say about America is true." I get flak when I quote that without disfavour, because professionals know that there are many kinds of "anythings," "anybods" and "truths," and Grogan's words sound cynical, defeating, and even nihilistic. Still. . . .

Perhaps we can reacquire a grip on reality by shifting the terms a bit and speaking of American life, especially American religious life, as being paradoxical, its signals often contradictory. The authors cite polls and opinion surveys by the scores to demonstrate this. For instance, "Americans" can be dogmatic about the exclusive paths to salvation which millions affirm but then also in many circumstances they talk as if they can issue free passes to heaven for almost everybody.



Noting the paradoxes and contradictions does not end inquiry and conversation. It inspires them, and in many ways it is curiosity about them which motivates Putnam and Campbell. Even on the basic point we ask, are Americans highly religious or highly secular? Answer: Yes. Foreign visitors regularly seem baffled by the combination of these adjectives within the same people and among groups. I've tried to patent the term "religiosecular" to address this. The term is inelegant and may not fly, but it captures a feature observable in most American lives and sub-cultures. Hence, Putnam and Campbell will not run out of topics and work. So, still half-baffled, we can await something like an *American Grace II*. And it will again inspire curiosity and conversation, as does this landmark book.

References

Wilfred M. McClay, "[For God and Country: Are Religious Believers Good Neighbors and Tolerant Citizens?](#)" *Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2010.

Robert Wright, "[Religious Persuasion](#)," *New York Times*, October 8, 2010.

Check out the [National Mission Resource Blog](#) - new posts arrive regularly during the working week.