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Spiritual Leadership, Responsible Management, Michael Dibbert

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Book Reviews

Jack Reese, Editor



DEACONS: MALE AND FEMALE

J. Stephen Sandifer

Houston: Keystone Publishing, 1989

Sandifer's study, written from within and for the churches of Christ, provides useful information for the intense discussion that lies on the near horizon for us in regard to the possibility and appropriateness of women deacons. He also attempts, on a smaller scale, to delineate the proper understanding of the male diaconate.

Sandifer divides his book into four parts: (1) textual considerations, in which he deals with the concept of deacons prior to Christianity and how they are described in the New Testament; (2) historical development, in which he surveys the writings about deacons in the early church and during the time of the Reformation Movement; (3) the Restoration Movement, where he details how the diaconate has been understood in our particular religious tradition; and (4) contemporary implications, in which he presents his own conclusions. These four main sections are followed by three appendices: "Diavkono" in the New Testament," "Deacons in Post New Testament Literature," and "Qualifications of Elders and Deacons."

While the title of the book includes both male and female, it is clear early on that the emphasis

falls on gaining more acceptability for women deacons. Written for an audience that has few questions about male deacons, this is a necessary and important emphasis.

Parts Two and Three are by far the most helpful sections of the book. Certainly, Sandifer's survey of the writings of the early church and through the Restoration Movement is not exhaustive, but he does present an adequate overview of most of the leading attitudes. His summary of the historical development of the diaconate provides an important service for a tradition that often overlooks the historical reasons things are as they are. Whether we want to admit it or not, we approach the diaconate in our time in a particular way because of how the church (or our tradition) has understood it for a long time. An awareness of that historical process can be a liberating experience in looking at the questions about male and female deacons anew.

Sandifer's presentation of the historical material is useful, but he is writing for an audience which still desires to base its actions in Scripture. Unfortunately, then, the weakest link in his presentation is the first part in which he discusses the New Testament texts. He deals directly with those texts very little; instead, he cites others' opinions about them. While it is important to see how others have interpreted the pertinent passages, it would have

been more helpful if he had examined the texts themselves in a primary way. As it is, it would be easy for someone to line up other "authorities" who disagree with the ones Sandifer has assembled.

There is an underlying question in parts of the book regarding how standard Sandifer regards first century church polity. He says that Paul's failure to mention either elders or deacons in the Corinthian letters is a "significant exception to what otherwise appears to be standard polity in Pauline churches" (30). In reality, if Paul's letters are the basis for understanding first century church polity the situation is just the opposite. Since Paul does not mention elders or deacons in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, or Philemon, might we not argue that their presence is the exception to the typical polity in Pauline churches? However, in his last chapter, "The New Testament Pattern," Sandifer returns to the issue of just how standard church polity was in the first century and raises some significant questions and suggests that variety may have been the norm in this regard.

Since Sandifer's goal was to present documents that bear on this question (not to answer the question), one is not prepared for the rather firm conclusions in his last two chapters. Without taking exception to his conclusions, they would be more compelling if they had been based on a fresh examination of the primary texts instead of a collection of citations from the secondary literature.

A minor, but irritating, aspect of the book is its use of Greek. One can only wonder why so many Greek terms are included for an audience which, clearly for the most part, does not know Greek. But besides that, there are several misspellings of Greek words and none of the regular critical markings are used. It would probably have been more helpful either to transliterate or simply to translate the terms appropriately.

Overall, Sandifer has assembled some important texts and has made some significant suggestions regarding them. As we continue our discussion of this very important issue, his volume will be an important one, primarily to remind us of where we have been and why. If it can stir us to renewed examination of the Biblical materials we may gain a clearer vision of where we ought to go.

TOM GEER
ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

MULTIPLE STAFF MINISTRIES

Kenneth R. Mitchell.

Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988.

"Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to disable the operations of this staff within forth-eight hours." This fanciful and disturbing suggestion is part of an exercise that examines staff weaknesses in Kenneth Mitchell's book, **Multiple Staff Ministries**. It is the last of sixteen steps in a self-study that lies at the heart of this fascinating work on multiple member church staffs.

Kenneth Mitchell begins by acknowledging the difficulties associated with church staffs and presents intriguing case studies as evidence. First, he offers a two chapter sketch of systems theory as the basis for understanding the dynamics within a staff. Systems theory terminology is clearly explained and then blended with examples of church staff relationships to illustrate the theory.

After this brief primer on systems theory, Mitchell presents a framework for conducting a self-study by a church staff. This exercise takes the form of sixteen questions that probe church and staff relationships. Each question is followed by suggestions for delving deeper into this line of thought. Following the questions, he offers a brief explanation of the importance and relevance of this issue in a church staff setting. A few of the topics covered are space usage; church history; church losses; staff roles; and church/staff secrets. Two particularly interesting concerns addressed were secrets and vulnerabilities. In the exercises the group is asked to explore the staff's past and determine if any unspoken secrets are influencing the staff's (or the church's) behavior. Also, the participants in the study are asked to determine areas of vulnerabilities within the staff. Then, the participants are invited to suggest ways to strengthen the areas of weakness they have uncovered.

Mitchell follows the self-examination with an analysis of an actual church's efforts to follow the exercise. Another chapter allows the reader to look over the shoulder of a church consultant as he probes the staff relationships in an actual church. This glimpse into the work of a church consultant along with the author's comments were fascinating.

A discussion of specific issues and principles of multiple staff ministry rounds out the book. Specific topics such as female ministers and couples functioning as ministry teams are also addressed.

Mitchell may be open to some criticism on the basis that the examples and case studies he presents are painted in rather broad strokes. It seems much easier to diagnose the cause of staff

problems in his case studies than in real life. However, considering the scope of the systems theory covered, Mitchell has done an admirable job in preparing a useful tool for a ministry team.

This work would serve as an excellent resource for a staff of any size to use. The greatest rewards would come from using the book as the centerpiece of a staff retreat where the book would be read separately by everyone and then the self-study exercise conducted as a team.

By Steven Thomas
Abilene, Texas

THE THEOLOGY OF THE SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, OP
Cambridge University Press, 1991

In light of the constant need to provide quality yet usable resources for adult Bible classes, I was delighted to find this volume. This helpful book is offered in the New Testament Theology series proposed by Cambridge University Press. The stated purpose of the series is to "provide a programmatic survey of the individual writings of the New Testament. It aims to remedy the deficiency of available published material which concentrates on the New Testament writers' theological concerns." The series is edited by J.D.G. Dunn.

This particular volume on II Corinthians is written by one of the leading authorities on the Corinthian correspondence. Murphy-O'Connor is the author of *I Corinthians* (NTS series published by Michael Glazer Press), the commentary on I and II Corinthians in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, the authoritative book *St. Paul's Corinth: Text and Archaeology*, and numerous academic articles on the Corinthian correspondence. While he brings all of his training and learning to the task of writing this volume, it is not over-laden with jargon and the prose is fluid and easy to read. It will benefit many, from the scholar to the Bible class teacher.

Besides the insightful development of the message of II Corinthians, the value of the book lies in Murphy-O'Connor's insightful analysis of the chronology related to I and II Corinthians and his analysis of the opponents. Scholars have often debated whether Paul's opponents in II Corinthians were Palestinian Judaizers or Hellenistic Jews encouraged in their opposition to Paul by itinerant preachers. To dismiss totally either group is to ignore large chunks of textual evidence. Murphy-

O'Connor proposes a tenuous alliance between two such groups. His scenario of events involving these opponents is compelling and this analysis gives added depth and insight to the theological development of the text.

If given the choice of only one book on II Corinthians one would still be hard pressed not to choose Victor Furnish's commentary in the Anchor Bible Series. Yet, true to the intent of this series, Murphy-O'Connor allows one to see fully the theological forest without getting lost in the exegetical trees. It rates a solid second choice.

This book recommends itself to several different contexts of use. Sermon suggestion, undergraduate college text, and aid to personal Bible study are a few to be mentioned. In particular, if the church I attended was in the process of composing a "person description" before embarking on a ministerial search, I would highly recommend this book as a resource for adult Bible classes.

By Mark Love
Gresham, OR.

CONFLICT IN MARK

Jack Dean Kingsbury
Fortress Press, 1990

Several excellent resources have been published in recent years to aid teachers and preachers in the study of the Gospel of Mark. Robert Guelich has recently written volume one of a two volume commentary on Mark for the Word Biblical Commentary. When completed, this work will serve well as a technical commentary for Mark students. Most works in recent times, however, have been written on a popular vein exploring larger themes and providing suggestion for sermons. Lamar Williamson's commentary, *Mark*, in the Interpretation Commentary series (1983), is an excellent example. Many of these recent treatments present Mark's gospel from a holistic perspective, working within the categories of literary, rhetorical, and to a certain extent redaction criticism. The result is high level scholarship accessible to a wide audience.

Jack Dean Kingsbury's *Conflict in Mark* is a highly readable book detailing the characters of Mark's gospel and demonstrating how their interplay forms the conflict that carries the narrative along. Bound up in the conflict of the gospel are major motifs focused on the identity of Jesus. The messianic secret, so crucial to the message of Mark is drawn in bold relief through the conflict drawn out by the characters.

The outline of the book is simple. Kingsbury introduces the reader to the major players in the narrative. Jesus, the disciples, the religious authorities, the demons, and minor characters all function in predictable ways. After briefly presenting the role and function of each group, Kingsbury devotes a chapter each to Jesus, the religious authorities, and the disciples. Each chapter is simply and clearly written and is peppered with scripture citations and references to other helpful works. While informed by Kingsbury's excellent scholarship, the book is not burdened with technical jargon.

I spent weeks running down Kingsbury's leads in my own study of the gospel of Mark. Most of the time I was richly rewarded by the suggestions provided. This is the mark (please excuse the pun) of a good book.

This book could be used to its full extent by anyone within the congregation. An adult Bible class would benefit from reading it together. I have used it as an undergraduate text in Synoptic studies. A paperback form Fortress press, the book is affordable and recommended to all who are studying the gospel of Mark in-depth.

Mark Love

MODELS OF THE CHURCH: Expanded Edition
Avery Dulles
Image Books, 1987

In describing the particular it is sometimes helpful to have a type or paradigm from which to base observations and make connections. H. Richard Niebuhr's book, **Christ and Culture**, is a classic example of an attempt to describe a set of paradigms that characterize in a general typical approaches to the relationship of Christ and the

world. Though flawed, Niebuhr's book gave us some handles to describe and differentiate our approaches to culture. "Christ versus culture," "Christ of culture," "Christ and culture in paradox," and "Christ transforming culture" have become a part of our theological vocabulary.

Avery Dulles' book falls within this same category. A Catholic theologian writing in the shadow of Vatican II, Dulles is concerned to differentiate five "models of the church." They are as follows: Institution; Mystical Communion; Sacrament; Herald; and Servant. While some of the labels are foreign to our way of speaking, the models are recognizable from Dulles' excellent descriptions. Even though he writes from a Catholic perspective, much of what we have seen in church life is described. The exception to this might be the "Sacrament" model. It appears to be a hybrid of Institution and Mystic Communion and as such does not function as purely as a type as do the others.

Each model is described and evaluated for strengths and weaknesses. His insights are interesting and helpful for evaluating both a particular congregation and the tradition in which our congregation lies.

The expanded edition of the book first published in 1978 is notable due to the inclusion of a chapter entitled, "The Church: Community of Disciples." Here Dulles uses the theological notion of the church as a community to synthesize and draw proper relationships between the four models. It is a very helpful chapter.

Dulles' book is recommended for everyone involved in interpreting congregational life. The fact is, all of us tend to exploit one model at the expense of others, thus limiting the meaning and experience of "church" for those in our congregations.

IN BRIEF

FEEDING AND LEADING: A Practical Handbook on Administration in Churches and Christian Organizations

Kenneth O. Gangel

Wheaton, Il.: Victor Books, 1989, 329 pages.

Kenneth Gangel has written a lengthy handbook (some might use it as a reference book) dealing with issues of church administration and leadership. It is a comprehensive examination of the processes of managing the church as an organization, and yet Gangel attempts to do it with a sensitivity to the biblical witness. The greatest asset of the book is its breadth of material. Gangel discusses goal-setting, strategic planning, assessing needs, delegating, motivating, organizing small groups, communication, planning and implementing business meetings, supervising, evaluating, cultivating a biblical leadership style, and considerably more. In each section he suggests resources for church leaders, testing instruments for evaluating the congregation and its leadership, and he provides charts and diagrams which make the work accessible.

His greatest deficit is lack of depth. While he discusses a variety of subjects, he is unable to provide a thorough discussion on any of it. Moreover, at times, his assessment of the organizational or administrative processes seems superficial. He does not articulate a philosophy of ministry or a theory of organizational management. He moves too quickly to lists and charts, to strategies and assessments. He does not provide an adequate framework to hang his suggestions. In addition, his view of Scripture is not holistic or contextual. Scripture citations pepper his discussion, but none are discussed in their literary or historical context. Passages are quoted or referred to too frequently and in too casual a way. But even with these problems, Gangel's book may be extremely useful to elders and staff ministers of a congregation, whether large or small. He exposes a number of issues church leaders should face as they make decisions, work together, and attempt to provide spiritual guidance to a congregation. He provides helpful suggestions for additional resources which could assist the leadership in assessing needs and constructing strategies.

Feeding and Leading is imminently a "how to" book. Gangel supplies specific and practical instructions for delegating, decision-making, strategic planning, supervision, evaluation, leading meetings, etc. With its several limitations, church leaders might find it a useful resource for assessing

congregational needs and re-thinking congregational leadership.

JRR

FAITH CARE: Ministering to All God's People through the Ages of Life

Daniel O. Aleshire

Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988, 179 pages.

Dan Aleshire has been a long-time professor of psychology and Christian education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and is currently in a leadership role for the Association of Theological Schools. His awareness of the variety of ministry contexts is extensive. And his sensitive to people in need is considerable. Dr. Aleshire is familiar with current psychological theories, and his treatment of this material is very responsible. But, more importantly, he knows the Word of God and is insightful in applying that knowledge to hurting people. And his obvious experience in ministry makes this book imminently practical. Aleshire is not so much interested in the industry or bureaucracy of ministry as the sensitive one-to-one attention to struggling individuals—in fact all individuals who, even in mundane pursuits, are struggling. He makes a defense of what he calls the ministry of attending. When the hard work of the ministry of attending is done, people feel blessed and affirmed in their work. Moreover, overall congregational ministry is made more effective.

Aleshire describes the complexities of the ministry of attending and the nature of faith development within a community of faith. Within that framework, he focuses on attending to children, adolescents, and adults. Within each he articulates several challenges in affective, behavioral, and cognitive growth and development.

He suggests various influences on individuals and provides insight into a ministry of attending in the moral, spiritual, worship, and educational life of a person in need. For children, adolescents, and adults, he supplies special insights pertaining to their unique needs. For example, Aleshire discusses the task of theological reflection for adults and its effect on receiving and achieving, failure and forgiveness, pain and redemption, loss and surrender, and their maturing faith.

This book is concisely and sensitively written. It is filled with vivid examples of hurting people who need a ministry of attending. Aleshire urges ministers to pay attention to people and thereby formulate a realistic and effective ministry to the whole congregation. This is a useful and practical book.

JRR

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT: A Guide for Leaders of the Church
Michael T. Dibbert.
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

Dibbert writes from his concern that most ministers have very little training in management from their graduate schools or seminaries and that most people who function in management in the business world do not understand management within a spiritual community. As a consequence, the spiritual management of most congregations is inefficient and largely ineffective. Dibbert's task is to provide church leaders with a rationale for spiritual management which grows out of biblical principles and which leads to a style of management unique to a spiritual community. He attempts to discern from the Bible a model for contemporary congregational leadership. He does so with a clear recognition of the functional differences between 1st and 20th century

congregations, both in terms of size and organizational needs.

Dibbert's use of the Bible is less than adequate. He isolates individual verses, makes references to texts out of their original contexts, and organizes principles of biblical church leadership by arranging strings of passages with no extrinsic connection. By and large, this method undermines his task.

Nevertheless, there are some things of value here. Dibbert supplies some helpful insights on the mission of the local church, the task of equipping, interrelationships within the congregation, effecting change, strategic planning, administration, and financial stewardship. There is enough of value in this book, both as to the "whys" and "hows" of spiritual management, to recommend it to church leaders who are examining leadership roles and organizational strategies within their congregation.

JRR

Deacons: Male and Female?

by J. Stephen Sandifer

Every church library and concerned person should have this landmark book.... It is gratifying to have collected, collated, and documented in one book the full range of Biblical and historical data one needs to arrive at a reasoned and "revelatory" view of women's role in the church and a better insight into male service and leadership roles also.

Sandifer provides an excellent history of the official roles that women have filled throughout Christianity. But this excellent book is not just about women as deacons. Sandifer asks that we reconsider our understanding of church offices in general.... Sandifer has gone to great pains to research both the Scriptures and the historical role of deacons.

Russell Boatman
The Christian Standard

John S. Scott
The Christian Chronicle

246 pages, paperback

\$10.95 + 1.25 postage and handling

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