

Why Church History Matters: An Invitation to Love and Learn from Our Past, by Robert F. Rea. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. 194 pp. + 6 pp. recommended resources + 24 pp. notes + 8 pp. name and subject index + 1 p. Scripture index. ISBN 978-0-8308-2819-7. Softcover, USD \$20.00.

Most Seventh-day Adventist colleges have an undergraduate course or two on church history. Rea, a professor at Lincoln Christian University, argues that "Christianity is essentially historical" (p. 16). Thus Christian colleges are justified in offering such courses in their department repertoire. Rea goes on to argue that by studying earlier Christians, it provides the student of history greater accountability. "The problem is this: when we ignore centuries of God-loving Christians and the rich well of resources that have passed on to us, sometimes ignoring even Scripture itself in the process, our perceived needs are often little more than mirrors of our fallen culture" (p. 15).

The book is neatly divided into three parts. Part one covers how we understand the Christian tradition (pp. 28-80), followed by a second section on expanding circles of inquiry (pp. 81-132), and completed by part three on tradition serving the church (pp. 133-190). A reflective essay on how to "celebrate the body of Christ" (pp. 191-194) along with a list of recommended resources for ministry (pp. 195-200) round out the volume. I personally found this last section extremely useful as I checked the holdings of my own institutional library to make sure that we have a well-rounded collection. There can be a tendency within institutional libraries of collections to reflect the whims of administration, faculty, and librarians. And just like book acquisitions, the student of history is reminded by studying the past that objectivity requires not just consulting authors who share your perspective. Ultimately objectivity, argues Rea, requires understanding those views different from your own (pp. 27-28). He agrees with C. S. Lewis that assuming that previous generation are inferior is nothing short of chronological snobbery (p. 148).

A fundamental thesis of this volume is that it was not until the Protestant Reformation that a dichotomy was created between tradition and Scripture. He argues that Protestants minimize Christian history thus exhibiting a fundamental distrust of tradition (p. 72). I would argue that Protestants in general could do better about emphasizing such history, yet the real question is that of authority. The author recognizes that the Reformers did not reject tradition outright, but rather that the authority of tradition must be mitigated. The lessening of tradition as authority he believes has contributed to the fragmentation among Protestants. The very diversity among Protestants, Rea argues, is evidence that the church must provide a proper interpretation of Scripture (p. 65). I wish the author had done a bit more in clarifying the role of tradition within Protestantism be-

cause the underlying problem is more a problem of authority rather than a neglect of the past. Protestants simply do not place the same authority that Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches do upon tradition (although between these two traditions the Orthodox see Scripture and tradition as a unified whole [pp. 63-64]). He does note that Protestants deny that tradition is revelation (p. 73), but this lack of emphasis upon tradition does not mean that Protestants do not recognize that there are rich and deep insights into Christian history. It appears that the author's own biases against Protestantism in this regard shine through. Despite this, the author argues that church history provides a helpful corrective across time and space, even if it functions authoritatively in different ways for different Christian groups. Yet I could not help but desire a more nuanced analysis in this regard.

What I found valuable, particular for when I teach courses on research, are some of the pedagogical hints richly dispersed throughout the volume. Thus the author notes how teaching faculty do a disservice to their students when they teach their students to form their opinion first because it falsely implies that we can come to the text without any presuppositions. I find this is a common pitfall. Students tell me what they are going to argue before they have begun to examine the evidence. Such patterns have led to many false teachings in Christian history. Modern biblical students will benefit from the historic community because studying the past allows us to become more sensitive to the presuppositions and worldviews of those whom we study (p. 90).

This is a helpful volume that belongs in religious library collections. It is a perceptive treatment that convincingly argues about the significance of Christian history. The author urges us to make friends across the centuries (p. 190). "By studying the past we learn to be cautious. We could misunderstand God's will and take a wrong position, sometimes with disastrous results" (p. 187).

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The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach, by Carrie Doehring. Revised and Expanded Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015. xxviii + 223 pp. ISBN 978-0-664-23840-7. Softcover, US\$25.00.

Seasoned pastoral theologian Carrie Doehring of the Iliff School of Theology incorporates a lot into this densely packed book. Her goal is to expli-