

own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture” (paragraph 10). In light of these “between the times” shortcomings of culture, a model for engaging, confronting, and calling culture to be transformed to the Lordship of Christ is lacking in Tennent’s discussion.

A final limitation of the work is in Tennent’s incomplete treatment of the prescriptive or descriptive nature of the Book of Acts (414–31). While this very large question is clearly posed and is apparently set up as a discussion (414–15), Tennent seems to address the question by narrating the story of global Pentecostalism. That is, he answers the prescriptive/descriptive question by offering more descriptions!

To sum up, the strengths of Tennent’s work far outweigh any weaknesses. It is a well-written, theologically robust invitation to consider mission in light of the missionary heart and ways of the Triune God. While it should be refreshing to missiologists, this book will also be stimulating to students as they train to be practitioners and theologians of mission. Specifically, I could envision using it for courses in Introduction to Missions and Theology of Mission.

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Joseph H. Hellerman. *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus’ Vision for Authentic Christian Community*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009. pp. 234. \$19.99.

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Joseph Hellerman serves on a pastoral staff and teaches New Testament at Biola University and Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California. He holds both a Th.M. and a Ph.D. Hellerman thoughtfully advocates the idea of church as community, indeed as family, noting that the latter is the key concept for Jesus, Paul, and other New Testament writers when speaking of the church.

Neatly packaged into nine chapters with an introduction and a conclusion, Hellerman is well organized, well reasoned, and enlightening. He fascinates as he educates, and there is a nice blend between current stories and illustrations, drawing from both the Bible and church history. There are also brief indices of names, subjects, and Scriptures.

Hellerman is a gifted writer. The reading is at once serious, current, captivating, concise, and enjoyable. There are multitudes of pithy, quotable lines. Hellerman believes the evangelical church in America is smitten by a crisis of radical individualism. In the introduction he says, “There is, in fact, no better way to come to grips with the spiritual and relational poverty of American

individualism than to compare our way of doing things with the strong-group, surrogate family relations of early Christianity. This is the central focus of this book” (6).

Chapter one compellingly argues that in most societies of the world throughout history, the group was and is more important than the individual. Decisions about vocation, choice of a spouse, and where to live were family matters, not solo decisions by an individual. What we need, Hellerman says, “is a wholesale reorientation of our worldview, and a key aspect of that reorientation must involve embracing the strong-group values that characterized the outlook of New Testament Christianity. Only then will we be able to revolutionize the way we relate to one another in our families and in our churches” (30).

Chapter two focuses on the family in the New Testament world. Illustrations are taken from Josephus’ reports about Herod’s family, Plutarch’s history of Mark Antony, Intertestamental literature, and a couple of modern stories that fit the pattern of the New Testament world. He argues that ties between brothers and sisters were stronger than those of husband and wife. This fits into the New Testament concept of the church as a family of brothers and sisters.

The argument of chapter three is that Jesus actually created a new group for believers. Hellerman deals with the tough sayings of Jesus about earthly family loyalties. He notes, “Jesus radically challenged His disciples to disavow primary loyalty to their natural families in order to join the new surrogate family of siblings He was establishing—the family of God. Relationships among God’s children were to take priority over blood family ties” (64).

Chapter four presses the argument from Paul’s church epistles where he frequently speaks of believers as brothers. There is an emphasis on Christ as *our* Savior, rather than as *my* Savior. Hellerman notes that the Bible never speaks of Christ as one’s “personal Savior.” Rather, one trusts Christ and becomes a member of a family of believers, united to Christ’s spiritual body, the church.

Chapter five turns to early church history to show how the church functioned as a surrogate family. Illustrations are drawn from the writings of Clement, Cyprian, and Tertullian (all of North Africa), Justin Martyr, and the pen of Lucian, a pagan. The stories are captivating and clearly forward the argument.

Chapter six argues for familification as well as justification. He writes, “We need to cultivate both the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of what happened to us at salvation, as we seek to mature in the Lord” (132). The final three chapters discuss life together, decision making, and leadership in the family of God—the church. The discussions are bold, fresh, and thought provoking. Hellerman is

experienced and up-to-date with helpful suggestions to improve our evangelical churches, to make them real change agents and centers of outreach.

Hellerman's vision is not new, but his presentation is compelling. The church is in crisis. Hellerman is humble, yet persuasive; passionate, but balanced; biblical and practical. He should be commended for sharing such vital and needed truths. I rarely disagreed with his message. He speaks from years of ministry experience and from inside a church seeking to function as community and family.

I do not intend to detract from his message by pointing out a few flaws or suggestions for improvement. However, the following are some matters related to the overall work and documentation.

The so-called name index is woefully lacking. It contains just forty-six names of authors, but an equally large number were mentioned and quoted in the book. In addition, editors' names were not included in the name index, nor were any of the many church fathers and classical writers.

The subject index likewise suffered from emaciation—only thirty-three entries on less than a full page. The Scripture index covered two pages and is helpful, especially because Hellerman discusses many passages in a mature, exegetical fashion. However, 1 Thess 2:8 on p. 226, and 1 John 3:1 on p. 205 were omitted from this index.

Scripture quotations were from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, unless otherwise noted. Most were transcribed flawlessly, but John 12:29 (on page 66) was misquoted slightly by omitting a “that.” On page sixty-nine, the reference to (8:22) should have read (Matt 8:22), since the previous quote was from Mark's Gospel, not Matthew. On page eighty-six, two “lower corner brackets” are changed to full brackets in the quote of Gal 2:10. This is actually a tampering with the *HCSB* text, but also shows inconsistency by not doing the same elsewhere, such as with the two lower corner brackets in Eph 2:16–17 on page 130.

On pages eighty-three and eighty-four, Hellerman argues for the superiority of the *HCSB* over the *NIV* and the *NRSV*, and on page ninety, he criticizes the *NIV* for giving a heading of “Marriage” above 1 Corinthians 7. But he ignores the *HCSB*'s heading of “Principles of Marriage” at the same location.

The issue of proper documentation arises when Hellerman writes, “All classical sources cited from Loeb Classical Library” (17). After checking many of such quotes, I can say that they are not uniformly from Loeb, and at times demonstrate glitches and errors. On pages seventy-three and ninety-seven, quotes attributed to Cyprian give no references at all! On page 101, quotes from two sources by Tertullian are combined into one contiguous paragraph without any indication of

where one leaves off and the other begins. On page forty-four, “*Ant.*” is used for Plutarch’s *Life of Antony*, but on page forty-five the same *Ant.* is meant to signify Josephus’ *Antiquities*. The later should at least be *Antiq.* On page 116, the reference to *The Passing of Peregrinus* has [p.] 12, but it should be [p.] 13, and the reference to the same on the following page should be 15, not 13. The Tertullian block quote on page ninety-eight was not from Loeb, was not intact, and needed an ellipsis to show elimination of some material from the quote.

On a more positive note, I appreciated the clear structure of the book, the use of simple headings and some bullet points, occasional numbering of ideas, and the use of several very excellent charts. Hellerman knows his facts and quotes Barna and others to support his arguments. His stories are interesting, personal, and insightful. He challenges all churches to move in the surrogate family direction, and he urges the emerging church movement not to ignore strong boundaries and doctrinal reliability. I would suggest that churches who heed Hellerman’s message should start by seeking to add the body-family concept into their doctrinal statements. This would require contemplation, discussion, and agreement on this vital practical issue.