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Deep Church Rising



Synopsis

The major cultural changes in Western societies since the Reformation have created a serious challenge for the church. Modernity in particular has been inhospitable to Christian orthodoxy and many have been tempted to reject classical versions of the faith. This has led to a division within churches that Walker and Parry name "the third schism" a divide between those who believe and practice the central tenets of Christian tradition and those who do not. The authors have adopted and adapted C. S. Lewis' phrase "deep church" to highlight the necessity of remembering our past in order to recover historic Christian orthodoxy. This book is a call to deep church, to remember our future, to make a half-turn back to premodernity; not in order to repeat or relive the past, but in order to draw on its rich yet often-forgotten resources for the here and now.

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Customer Reviews

Robin Parry and Andrew Walker's new book, "Deep Church Rising", is a call to ressourcement (see, for example, 44) in response to the unique challenges of our age. As Parry and Walker (henceforth P&W) point out, "The purpose of going back is not one of antiquarian curiosity, but to retrieve something that we have lost in order to make the church vital again in the present." (49) The book unfolds in two parts: diagnosis and remedy. In Part One, "The Third Schism: On Losing the Gospel," P&W spend two chapters unpacking what they call the "third schism". As they explain, the first schism was the split of Eastern and Western churches while the second schism arose at the time of the Reformation. According to P&W, our contemporary age presents challenges to the church that are of sufficient gravity to warrant the sober moniker "the third schism". In

short, we are in an age where the very identity of the church is in question. The situation P&W describe reminds me of J.B. Phillips's translation of Romans 12:2: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within." As P&W see it, the modern world is squeezing Christianity into its mould even as it undermines the very basis of Christian faith in its denial of the Trinity, incarnation, and the resurrection, and in its treating Scripture as an object of scientific inquiry rather than as a sacred text. (x) One can get a sense for the extreme boundary of the current situation by considering the case of Don Cupitt, an Anglican cum atheist who insists he as yet remains a Christian (10).

The twenty-first century churches have a problem. Maybe more than one. We also have more than a few people providing analyses and solutions. *Deep Church Rising: The Third Schism and the Recovery of Christian Orthodoxy* by Andrew G. Walker and Robin A. Parry (Cascade Books, 2014; \$22.00) is a helpful corrective to the culture-bound, superficial diagnoses and prescriptions that get so much attention. Rather than attempting to reinvent the faith or the Church for post-modern times, the book calls for a return to "deep Church." The term was coined by C.S. Lewis along with his more famous popularization of "mere Christianity." These authors' choice of the less familiar Lewisian phrase points to its different nuance: "Mere Christianity" can focus on individual faith commitment apart from community. "Deep Church" emphasizes that mere Christianity must be connected to Christ's Body "and that the Church is vast and ancient as well as urgent and present. The book calls for a return to historical Christianity. For many this would be not a return, but an initial turn: the connection is tenuous between some of today's branches of the faith and Christianity's roots. Walker and Parry would have us take seriously the standard of St. Vincent of Lérins (d. c. 445) who said we should hold fast to that which has been taught always, everywhere, and by all. That is, the authors call us to value tradition in the Church's teaching and practice "in its very identity. This point is one of three noteworthy features of the book. The authors lead us on an accessible and convincing tour through prominent Patristic theologians on tradition.

Walker and Parry claim we have lost, or are in danger of losing, the gospel and they blame the likes of Don Cupitt, John Robinson, David Jenkins, John Hick, Maurice Wiles and Shelby Spong and the more widely read Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. In so doing, they show their ignorance of these theologians. They are not all the same. Robinson and Jenkins were orthodox. To put them under the same banner as Spong and Cupitt is ridiculous. They say that Christianity isn't a lump

of clay that can be remoulded to suit â “ but in fact that is what Christianity has always been doing
â “ adapting itself to successive generations. This loss of the gospel is leading to what they call
â ^the third schism. (The first schism was the split between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox
Church in the eleventh century. The second was the split between Roman Catholics and
Protestants arising from the Reformation in the sixteenth century. The third schism, they say, is the
divide between those who believe in the orthodox core of the Christian faith, as expressed in the
historic creeds, and those who do not. They argue for unity among all those who hold to the
orthodox core of the Christian faith, whether they be evangelical Protestants, traditional Anglicans,
Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. This means those who, as Justin Welby says of himself,
â œsay the creed without crossing my fingers at any point.â •The challenge for evangelicals is
whether they are prepared to see as our allies those whom we have traditionally seen as our
enemies â “ Anglo-Catholics, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox. Where do we draw the â ^battle
linesâ ™? Which issues do we regard as fundamental and which are secondary? This boils down to
the question, who do I count as a fellow Christian?

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