

## Book Review:

### ***Thoughtful Adaptations to Change: Authentic Christian Faith in Postmodern Times***

By Edwin F. Drewlo

Victoria, BC, Canada: Friesen Press, 2017. 267 Pages.

Reviewed by Mike Richardson

“I am writing from a pastoral perspective for the “person in the pew” (p 6), as well as for those in church leadership. Drewlo’s thrust is toward the practical ministry of the church. His desire is to help those who share his modern background to navigate the disconcerting changes they have experienced in their churches during the last 40 or 50 years. He identifies the changes in terms of a shift in culture from modernism to postmodernism.

Drewlo brings extensive pastoral experience to his treatment of the topic having pastored in four Christian and Missionary Alliance churches as well as extensively serving as a transition pastor. In 2006, he established a non-profit called Second Wind Ministries with the purpose of helping those struggling with transitions, including pastors. His educational background culminated in a Doctor of Ministry from Trinity International University.

The ten chapters of the book could be divided into introductory material (Chapters 1-3), a summary of the transition from modernism to postmodernism (Chapters 4-6), and practical ministry responses (Chapters 7-10).

After making a number of observations regarding change in general chapter 1, chapter 2 addresses a relativizing of values among youth (GenX and Millennials) and a decline of numbers in the church during the last two decades. Chapter 3 identifies some significant Signs of Change expressed in fashion, music, morality, and spirituality, with modernism’s structuralism being significant in many of the explanations.

In Chapter 4 the author provides a helpful synthesis summarizing the flow of Western culture through pre-modern, modern, into postmodern influences through individuals and ideas. Chapter 5 details a number of the

values and convictions of postmodernism regarding epistemology, history and historical inquiry, pluralism, tolerance, the deification of self, and experience. According to the author, this is an evaluation of postmodernism “from a modern perspective” (p 71). In chapter 6, Drewlo shifts to describing positive outcomes of the influence of postmodernism dealing with authenticity, friendship and community, justice and compassion, passion, and organic spirituality.

Chapter 7 addresses conflicts between more modern and more postmodern Christians, and between Christianity and an increasingly postmodern culture. Drewlo analyzes the topics of tolerance, orthodoxy, judgmentalism, and hermeneutics. Chapter 8 reflects the author’s perspective of engaging the present postmodern pluralistic culture, using Israel’s engagement with the surrounding nations as an example. He draws parallels suggesting an appropriate Christian response today, trying to navigate an orthodox path between accommodation and being reclusive.

In Chapter 9 the author identifies some of the “main features of productive pastoral work” (p 208) in the present postmodern cultural context. He addresses issues such as authenticity, vision, pastoral care, administrative leadership, and evangelism and mission. Chapter 10 affirms the centrality of the gospel and the need to emphasize individual witness.

In terms of weaknesses, perhaps too many of the changes in the church in recent history are attributed to a modern/postmodern migration of the culture, society, and theology. Many may question the warrant for how universally this categorization and explanation of change is applied. Among many theological issues, Drewlo is concerned about the rise of the gospel of the kingdom (p 171) and the incorporation of “social

justice” (p 226) to the gospel message. Though “somewhat compatible” (p 171) with the gospel of justification for the individual, the emphasis on the kingdom is perceived as a postmodern accommodation rather than a strategic theological development for the sake of mission.

In terms of strengths, Drewlo’s extensive pastoral and ministry experience provides rich insights into some of the key practices and qualities that should characterize pastoral practice in the early 21st century (Chapter 9). Those who share a close cultural and theological location with the author will find comfort and validation in his treatment of the difficult changes they have experienced in the last 40 or 50 years, and this is the group to whom the author directed his efforts and perhaps the primary audience for the book.