

MODERN REFORMATION

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

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FINDING
YOURSELF
IN GOD'S
STORY

DEPARTMENTS

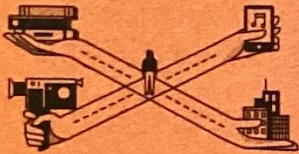
5

THEOLOGY

A Brief Comparison
of Charismatic and
Reformed Views of
Church Music

BY PAUL MUNSON

8



CHRIST & CULTURE

The Dividing Wall:
Encouragement for
My White Ally

BY NANA DOLCE

61



BOOK REVIEWS

You Are What You Love

REVIEWED BY
TIMOTHY M. MASSARO

*Why Bother with
Church?*

REVIEWED BY
NICHOLAS DAVIS

The Grand Design

REVIEWED BY
SILVERIO GONZALEZ

*Music, Modernity,
and God*

REVIEWED BY
MICAH EVERETT

70



GEEK SQUAD

Key Concepts in
Reformed Spirituality

BY MR EDITORS

72

BACK PAGE

Pray for the City

BY MICHAEL S. HORTON

MODERN REFORMATION

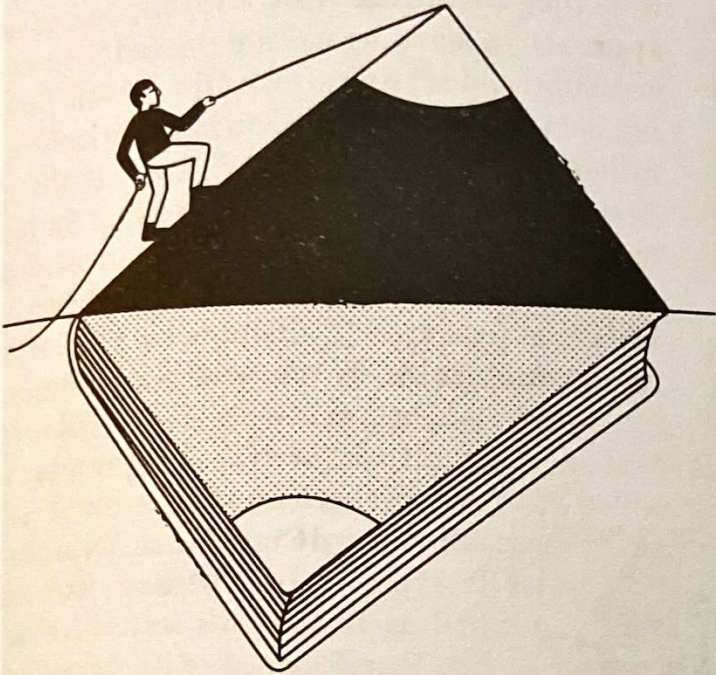
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Book Reviews

62

You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit

by James K. A. Smith

REVIEWED BY
Timothy W. Massaro

64

Why Bother with Church? And Other Questions about Why You Need It and Why It Needs You

by Sam Allberry

REVIEWED BY
Nicholas Davis

65

The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them

by Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock

REVIEWED BY
Silverio Gonzalez

66

Music, Modernity, and God: Essays in Listening

by Jeremy Begbie

REVIEWED BY
Micah Everett

Why Bother with Church? And Other Questions about Why You Need It and Why It Needs You

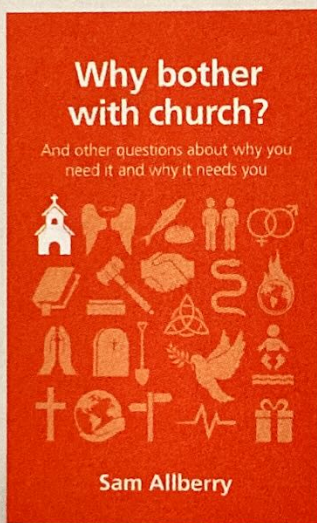
by Sam Allberry

The Good Book Company 2016

95 pages (paperback), \$7.99

Sam Allberry's *Why Bother with Church?* is a good, short read that addresses one of the greatest problems of our secular age: floundering church attendance. A new study by the Pew Research Center suggests that worship services are not as important as the other events Americans have on the weekly agenda (see <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/08/23/choosing-a-new-church-or-house-of-worship>). Why should I make time for church when I can be sleeping in, cooking, shopping, relaxing, podcasting, or watching sports? Does it really matter all that much? This is where Pastor Allberry comes in with a much needed remedy: "Why on earth would I not bother with church?"

The book begins with an honest acknowledgement that, yes, sometimes even Christians think the local park (or in my case, watching Manchester United beat Manchester City) sounds like a whole lot more fun than sitting through another boring church service. Allberry reminds us that even though there are many reasons why we may try to avoid church ("church has done more harm than good," "church is boring," "church has hurt me," and "church has exhausted me"), there are more compelling reasons to rediscover the beauty of church and the abundant blessings it brings. When we understand what the church is, why we need the church, and why it needs us, we will have a hard time skipping out on it or avoiding it.



Allberry doesn't merely tell us what church is or why it matters, only to leave the skeptic, seeker, or attender wanting. He fields numerous practical questions that address everyday concerns and real-life objections. In chapter 3, Allberry offers advice on how to pick a good church. In chapter 4, he exposes common errors in thinking—such as "Can't I view my small group as my church?" and "Why are there so many denominations?"—offering biblically saturated responses with pastoral wisdom and guidance. Chapter 5, "How Do I Survive Church?," alone is worth purchasing the book. Pastors would do well listening to Allberry's answers to these questions, and everyone—church member or outlaw—will find comfort in the words he shares.

The only weakness I found is actually its greatest strength: the book is too short; I wanted him to keep going! And this is exactly why such a book should be widely read and shared with all of our friends and family who describe themselves as "Nones" or "Dones." *Why Bother with Church?* is written for them, and for you. It's a great reminder as to why we should marvel at the miracle of the local church.

Sam Allberry is a gifted communicator. What impressed me the most was his pastorally sensitive tone that permeates the book. He handles biblical texts well and delicately encourages the unchurched and de-churched to consider (or reconsider) church—no matter what has happened in the past or might happen in the future. The church is worth it, so don't give up on it just yet. Bother with church. **MR**

NICHOLAS DAVIS is assistant pastor at Christ Church Presbyterian in Irvine, California, and assistant producer of *White Horse Inn*.