

TEN BOOKS TO RESCUE FROM THE FIRE

Derek Tidball

On what possible basis can one select ten precious books from one's library, as the Editor has requested I do, should the house catch fire? Let me change the question slightly and tell you rather of ten volumes that I would like to take with me if marooned on a desert island. That gives me the opportunity of selecting some classics, all books that I have read or used, but which I would love to read again, at leisure, and enjoy savouring.

I would go for John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* because I have never had the chance of reading it from cover to cover. Its range and depth is remarkable and it would be sufficiently provocative for me to be challenged to think clearly through my own theological position about a number of issues that most of the time go on the 'back burner'.

I would take two devotional classics with me to meditate and pray through. I would go for Jim Packer's *Knowing God*. It had a profound effect on me when it was first published and is worth revisiting. Then I would take John Stott's *The Cross of Christ* because of the richness of his exposition of the atonement.

Turning to the biblical area, I would want to have Walter Brueggemann's *Theology of the Old Testament*. Brueggemann is the most stimulating Old Testament scholar that I know, even though I don't always agree with him. Here he has written a genuinely fresh theology of the Old Testament that resonates with post-modern culture. He has so many insights, so many wise words and so many provocative ideas that I would love to grapple with it in greater depth than I've been able to do up to now. I would take his commentary on *Genesis* as well. What windows it opened for me when I first read it. It side-stepped all the arid, historical debates and gave such a fresh understanding of its teaching that I would certainly want to read the bits I have not yet read and to go over again the bits I have. This is one of his best commentaries.

In the New Testament, I would make sure I had a copy of Joel Green's commentary on the gospel of *Luke*. I have not had time to do anything but dip into it as yet, but every bit that I've looked at has been rewarding. It's a commentary for the preacher.

Then too I would pack the collection of essays entitled *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, edited by Howard Marshall and David Peterson. Acts raises so many queries theologically and here is a wide range of papers which relate its theology to the present day.

As a personal discipline I seek to balance my reading between the devotional, the biblical, the theological, the applied, the sociological and the historical. Two volumes I would choose from the history section would be Michael Watts' 'magnum opus' on *The Dissenters*. The second volume relates to the nineteenth century, an understanding of which is vital to enable us to interpret where we are today. Then I would pick David Bebbington's *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* off the shelf. It tells a fine story which both inspires and offers some wise cautions for contemporary evangelicalism.

If George Beasley-Murray, in a recent edition of *Ministry Today*, had not chosen the *Dictionary of Jesus & the Gospels* and the *Dictionary of Paul & his Letters*, produced by IVP, I might well have done so. They are like mines full of rich minerals which provide hours of happy digging. But since he did, I might go for the *Dictionary of Ethics & Pastoral Theology*, edited by David Atkinson and David Field. It's another mine in which I would love to quarry. It never ceases to expand my thinking in areas with which I am familiar and introduce me to whole new areas which are uncharted territory.

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THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE! GENXERS & THE XT FILES

Rowland Croucher

(This article is an adaptation of a Commencement Address given at the University of Queensland in March 1998)

Commencement addresses are an interesting genre. They are the 'You're gonna make it' speech by some famous person to the graduating class. The most talked about last year was Kurt