

using local arts for achieving kingdom goals. The CLAT method does not require that the reader have extensive background or education in the arts. The language in the *Manual* is understandable to the layman, and people with no arts training could incorporate the CLAT process into their existing ministries.

Taken together, the two-volume ethnodoxology *Handbook* and *Manual* represent not only a tremendous statement on the current state of expressive arts in Christian worship but also guidance in how to continue developing and enhancing the communication of the gospel. I commend both volumes to leaders and fieldworkers engaged in any sort of ministry. It will challenge you, stimulate ideas about future directions, and open up a vast panorama of God's creation in worship.

Reviewed by Neil R. Coulter

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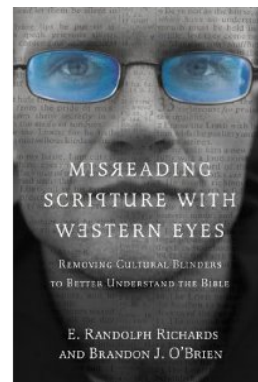
Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes *Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*

E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien
Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012

Favourite Quote - Bible reading is necessarily contextual. There is no purely objective biblical interpretation. This is not postmodern relativism. We believe truth is truth. (12)

Richards and O'Brien see worldview as an iceberg. Worldviews can blind us to what is really being said, resulting in what they call 'cultural blinders.' The authors organize nine of these cultural blinders into three categories based on the iceberg idea. Those we see and know, like the ice above the water. Those just below the surface that are not so obvious. And those that are deep below the surface that can do the most damage to interpretation and application of scripture.

The book is organized into three parts corresponding to the top, middle and bottom of the iceberg. Each chapter ends with probing questions.



Above the Surface

Mores

Race and Ethnicity

Language

Just Below the Surface

Individualism and Collectivism

Honor/Shame and Right/Wrong

Time

Deep Below the Surface

Rules and Relationships

Virtue and Vice

Finding the Center of God's Will

The authors basically challenge us to 'read ourselves' but not in the usual meaning of the words when applied to Bible reading. Usually we go to the bible looking for the lesson or the application, studying it to examine ourselves. I call this the Aesop's Fable view of scripture. Your 'take away' is the famed 'moral of the story.' This is not exactly what the authors mean by 'read ourselves.' It is not so much a reading on a personal level than it is on a collective level. How do we as Westerners understand a reading of scripture when something is missing or doesn't quite make sense? Are we filling in the blanks before we ask if the missing thing might have been assumed by the original hearers? How can we know? The best part of this book is the conclusion with its advice. (You won't likely appreciate this advice without reading the whole book first!)

The last chapter 'It's All about Me: Finding the Center of God's Will' will surely challenge American sensibilities. If the cultural blinders that are found deeper on the 'iceberg' have greater potential for misreading and therefore misapplying scripture, then Westerners, especially Americans, would be wise to prayerfully read and reread chapter nine. With all of our self-help Christian books to find God's will for us, you just might find this chapter a refreshing change, as I did.

Another genre of Christian books, second only to the self-help, in titles, are those on prophecy. Again, the section in chapter nine, 'God's Planned End Will Happen in My Lifetime' was informative and refreshing. I now have a word for the unsatisfactory exegesis I've unwittingly accepted most of my Christian life. *Pesher* is a method of interpretation that requires two presuppositions. Briefly stated they are 1) that a text refers to the end times and 2) that we live in the end times. The authors point out 'these assumptions have serious consequences for the way we read scripture' (198).

Another assumption, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, a term coined by sociologist Christian Smith, teaches that the purpose of religious faith is 'providing therapeutic benefits to its adherents.' (195) The authors look at recent

history to help us understand how we acquired these assumptions or cultural blinders. I found their suggestions insightful and gracious.

Lest you get the impression this book is too sombre, know that the authors provide some humorous real life experiences. As they attempted to conclude with ‘Three Easy Steps for Removing Our Cultural Blinders’ they are faced with their own Western style of problem solving. Brandon asks a friend, Phebe, for help.

Phebe is Syrian and speaks Arabic as a first language. She and her husband, a Canadian, are high-school sweethearts who met at a boarding school in Germany. Before moving to Europe, her husband grew up in Ecuador. After they married, they spent time as missionaries in Africa. They now live in the Chicago suburbs. They are perhaps the most ‘international’ couple I know.

And she said-

‘That’s sort of a Western thing to want, isn’t it?’ she asked with a smile. ‘Three easy steps for identifying our cultural presuppositions!’ (211)

I will mention here that in the chapter on ‘mores’ they do suggest three questions to ask yourself (which I have written in the inside cover of my ESV Study Bible) when the story doesn’t quite make sense. These are:

1. Clearly, this passage is saying (or not saying) _____ is right/ wrong.
2. Is (that issue) really what is condemned?
3. Am I adding/ removing some elements? (48).

But this book will not give you a new methodology. The authors’ goal is to ‘help you become a certain kind of reader: the kind of reader who is increasingly aware of his or her cultural assumptions. And that takes time, self-reflection and hard work’ (212). There are no ‘three easy steps’ but they offer advice to help us do the hard work of self-reflection, embrace complexity, beware of overcorrection, be teachable, embrace error and read together.

This book is NOT just for those working across cultures. If you read the Bible, you are in the ‘foreign land of Scripture’ (11).

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