

## Wisdom from Babylon

by Gordon T. Smith

We are all too aware that the cultural landscape in Canada has changed dramatically over the last several years. Gone are the days when a Judeo-Christian world view was foundational to our cultural perspective. It seems that the church increasingly is being pushed to the margin. How are we as God's people going to respond to these changes? What kind of leaders do we need to help us navigate through this new cultural landscape? These are precisely the key questions that Gordon T. Smith, President of Ambrose University in Calgary, grapples with in "Wisdom from Babylon: Leadership for the Church in a Secular Age".

The first half of Dr. Smith's book helps a reader think through their response to the changing culture. In this section he explores several different responses: adopt secularism, the monastic retreat (promoted by Rod Dreher in the Benedict Option), the culture war response (which seems to be rampant currently), and finally the "faithful presence" response. Having done a cursory exploration of these four responses, Dr. Smith then asks us to glean wisdom from a variety of voices to help us evaluate these responses. He looks at exilic and postexilic prophets. He spends time listening to the early church. He hears from historic minority churches in other parts of the world. Lastly, he listens to theologians that have traveled this path before us in Central and Western Europe. Then he returns to the four responses to determine which one engages the current culture in the most Christ-like and effective manner.

Having laid that foundation, Dr. Smith moves to exploring how leaders can help the church respond well. He focuses on some of the key competencies necessary for leaders: to create environments where people can be formed as people of God and live out of their identity as they engage in culture, to be taught the wisdom necessary to navigate this new context, and to carry out mission in a 1 Peter 3:13-16 manner. He encourages leaders toward broader kingdom engagement and being a non-anxious presence in a deeply fearful world.

This little, 180-page, volume is jam packed with incredible wisdom, for such a time as this. It is highly accessible for pastor and lay person alike. It also comes from a fellow Canadian, who reflects our Canadian context better than many of the American writers currently grappling with this topic.

Considering not only the slide towards secularism, but also the level of discord and division that we are currently embroiled in; we need to respond well as God's people. We desperately need leaders who are equipped to bring the church together in Christ centered unity and guide it forward to engage in mission well. This volume provides help for doing precisely that. May we open our ears for the "Wisdom From Babylon".

Reviewed by Neil Bassingthwaighe & Bill Taylor

