

***Picturing Christian Witness.* By Stanley Skreslet. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. 261 pages. Softcover, \$24.99.**

In *Picturing Christian Witness*, Stanley Skreslet seeks to renew a New Testament theology of Christian mission through the use of visual images. To accomplish this, his work examines the mission practice of Jesus' followers in the New Testament and illustrates these practices with appropriate visual images. The five images he selects are announcing good news, sharing Christ with friends, crossing social barriers, shepherding sheep, and cooperating in planting and building. He includes thirty-one figures to illustrate his work (xiii-xv).

Skreslet has selected *personal* images of mission over *corporate* images because he perceives an imbalance in previous studies in favor of the corporate images. Additionally, the choice of personal images offers several advantages that may aid followers of Christ in their attempts to share their faith. By focusing on personal and individual images, he can depict ordinary Christians, growing Christians, and imperfect Christians, each of whom seek to fulfill Christ's mission. Almost all Christians involved in mission perceive themselves in one of these three categories, and Skreslet anticipates helping them.

Skreslet aims to offer a theology of mission capable of moving Christians into the twenty-first century. He believes that new, fresh images may help him accomplish this worthy goal. To achieve this end, he attempts to apply the New Testament more directly to the visual depiction of Christian mission. He argues that past images of Christian mission depicted so-called Western superiority (227). For this reason, the Christian world, especially in ecumenical circles, needs new images that set aside the images of the past in favor of images that will chart a course for the future. His study of the New Testament leads him to conclude that no single image dominated the New Testament, but that early Christians used a variety of images to depict mission. Consequently, interpreters should not ascribe this diversity to postmodernism. In the end, Skreslet defines Christian mission as action, and specifically, the actions of "announcing Good News, sharing Christ with friends, interpreting, shepherding, and planting/building" (236).

Several items commend Skreslet's work. To begin with, the figures Skreslet includes in his work accomplish his purpose. The reviewer is unremarkably ordinary in his appreciation for art, and Skreslet's figures instructed his uninitiated mind and uninitiated heart (see especially figures 6, 9, 16, 17, 18, 21). Readers/viewers who are as uninitiated with art as the reviewer will appreciate Skreslet's interpretation of the figures he uses. His use of figures to advance mission theology and practice reminds readers/viewers of the power of images in the teaching of mission. The reviewer will consider expanding his use of images in the classroom.

Readers will find some trouble with Skreslet's naiveté and assumptions. He assumes that images from previous eras, even some biblical images, communicate values at odds with the gospel (19). Among these, he numbers warfare images. While most Christians would consider

images of the crusades as out of bounds for Christian use, the warfare image is entirely appropriate. Christ has little problem with it for He has promised to return on a white stallion to defeat evil. Warfare unbiblically conceived always deserves Christian condemnation, but warfare conceived of biblically deserves support from both the theological and artistic communities. If Skreslet dismisses images that offend non-Christians, he will eventually find himself dismissing his own images, for each of his images visualize the insufficiency of non-Christians religions. His images also visualize the need non-Christians have for the church to proclaim the good news, their need for Christian friends to share Christ with them, their need of shepherding into the fold, their need to become a part of Christ's new building, and their need for the Lord to harvest them in his new crop of eternal life. There is no end to the concessions the world will demand of Christian images once Christians back away from legitimate biblical images.

Despite this, Skreslet has offered a unique work that should enhance the reflection upon and practice of Christian mission. If readers/viewers take his work seriously, and if they can grow in their appreciation of visual arts, they will help Skreslet achieve the purpose behind his commendable work.

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***Preaching With Power.* By Michael Duduitt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. 256 pages. Softcover, \$16.99.**

Among today's homileticians, Michael Duduitt is no stranger. He is the founding publisher and the editor of "Preaching Magazine." Those familiar with the magazine, will recognize the interviews by Duduitt, published in the magazine during this past decade, interviews which he credits as being among "the most important and popular features." This compilation contains interviews of twenty preachers whom he calls "dynamic outstanding communicators with great influences of preaching."

The introduction includes a summary of the book. Built around twenty interviewees, the book dedicates each chapter to one of these evangelical pastors known to be "classic expositors, creative innovators, and key figures" such as, John MacArthur, Haddon Robinson, Adrian Rogers, David Jeremiah, Rick Warren, T. D. Jakes, Jerry Falwell, John Maxwell, Brian McLaren, Ed Young Jr. and Andy Stanley, just to name a few. Every chapter starts with a short introduction about the person interviewed, then proceeds with standard questions built around his philosophy of preaching, moving toward discussing how these preachers prepare and plan their sermons, discovering who influenced them and their preaching and then concluding with what they would say to each of us regarding preaching. In the first chapter, Duduitt attempts to define Expository Preaching in an interview with Brian Chappel. The rest of the nineteen interviews are arranged around a specific theme or topic he believes best suits the preacher and his preaching context.