



Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church

By Michael Horton

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This inspired challenge to contemporary American Christianity calls the church to return to its biblical foundation. Now in paper.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In another screed on what's wrong with American Christianity, theology professor Horton, of Westminster Seminary California, bemoans the slide of the American Christian church into what he, and others, call a moralistic, therapeutic deism. Drawing on studies, surveys and anecdotal evidence, Horton reaches the oft-repeated conclusion that American Christianity is self-centered rather than Christ-centered, Jesus is a life coach rather than a redeemer, and salvation is focused on therapeutic well-being. He rants against the purveyors of this watered-down Christianity--Robert Schuller, T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer--but saves his most savage attack for megachurch preacher Joel Osteen, whom Horton depicts as a snake-oil salesman teaching that God is a personal shopper ready to deliver happiness and prosperity if only individuals let God know their needs. Horton reveals his lack of theological depth when he argues that ancient Gnostics saw God as no different from humans. Yet Gnosticism's entire point is this difference. Horton regrettably offers no recommendation for the reformation of American Christianity beyond a simplistic call to let the church be defined by the Gospel rather than the laws of the market. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From the Inside Flap

Invoking Martin Luther's treatise *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Michael Horton fears that the church in America has also been willingly taken captive. The captors are American culture and ideals: consumerism, pragmatism, self-sufficiency, individualism, positive thinking, personal prosperity, and nationalism. Though these are antithetical to the gospel, we have often made them part and parcel with it.

Horton argues that while we haven't yet arrived at Christless Christianity, we are well on our way. Though we invoke the name of Christ, too often Christ and the Christ-centered gospel are pushed aside. The result is a message and a faith that are, in Horton's words, "trivial, sentimental, affirming, and irrelevant." This alternative "gospel" is a message of moralism, personal comfort, self-help, self-improvement, and individualistic religion. It trivializes God, making him a means to our selfish ends. Horton skillfully diagnoses the problem and points to the solution: a return to the unadulterated gospel of salvation. Here is a must-read for anyone concerned about the state and future of Christianity and the church in America.

From the Back Cover

The church in America has been willingly taken captive. The captors are American culture and ideals: consumerism, pragmatism, self-sufficiency, individualism, positive thinking, personal prosperity, and nationalism. These are antithetical to the gospel, but we have nevertheless made them part and parcel with it. We are well on our way to a Christless Christianity.

The result? A faith that is, in Michael Horton's prophetic words, "trivial, sentimental, affirming, and irrelevant." This alternative "gospel" is a message of moralism, personal comfort, self-help, self-improvement, and individualistic religion. It trivializes God, making him a means to our selfish ends.

In this critically acclaimed book, Horton skillfully diagnoses the problem and points to the solution: a return to the unadulterated gospel of salvation. Here is a must-read for anyone concerned about the state and future of Christianity and the church in America.

"A more important and timely volume could not have been written."--Thabiti M. Anyabwile, senior pastor, First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

"Horton's brush is broad--expect loud lamentation from the evangelical camp--but the picture he paints is largely accurate."--Parker T. Williamson, editor emeritus and senior correspondent, *The Presbyterian Layman*

"*Christless Christianity* establishes Michael Horton as the outstanding protagonist for classical Protestant orthodoxy."--Episcopal Bishop C. FitzSimons Allison

Michael Horton (PhD, University of Coventry and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford) is J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California. He hosts the *White Horse Inn* radio broadcast and is editor-in-chief of *Modern Reformation* magazine. He is the author/editor of more than fifteen books, including *Putting Amazing Back into Grace*, *The Gospel-Driven Life*, *The Gospel Commission*, and *Introducing Covenant Theology*.

Users Review

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