particularly in the US, have indeed been deeply seduced by Western consumerism and politics, and ask entirely too much of the political system. This book offers a strong theopolitical corrective toward the edification of the public body of Christ, the church.

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Elmer John Thiessen. *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011.

A significant contribution to the study of evangelism, *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion* is ambitious in appealing to two divergent audiences. On the one hand, author Elmer Thiessen constructs a careful apologetic that rationalizes the moral benefit of proselytization for sceptics. On the other hand, he provides a thorough ethical guide for active Christian evangelists of non-believers. Throughout, he strikes a good balance between the scholarly and the practical.

Thiessen is refreshingly candid and resists evading questions typically dividing so-called liberals and conservatives. He also presents opposing voices fairly, engaging the work of esteemed thinkers such as David Novak and Jay Newman, who disagree with his perspective.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is more philosophical and corrects what Thiessen sees as the erroneous reasoning that, because some proselytizers use coercive methods and have questionable intentions, all attempts to evangelize are unethical. He exposes contradictions within the logic of those opposing faith propagation. For example, he argues that it is human nature to try to convince others of one's point of view; even those who are against conversion efforts employ similar strategies. Marketing, parenting, and teaching are listed as instances of people using means of persuasion. Here, I think a clearer distinction must be made between persuasion and proselytization. The former can be as simple as trying to get a child to try a new food, while the latter is concerned with matters of

ultimacy, such as one's salvation and one's deepest spiritual commitments.

The second part presents fifteen criteria for ethical proselytization. Thiessen is critical of those more concerned with the goal of saving souls at any cost than with the means by which it is achieved. He stresses the ethical obligation to respect the dignity, freedom, and cultural identities of potential converts, and he urges proselytizers to resist deception, arrogance, and physical, psychological, emotional, and social forms of coercion. Finally, he maintains that Christians must allow room for other religions to disseminate their faiths as well.

The author writes that "there are no legitimate moral objections that can be raised against proselytizing as a whole" (140-41). While his ethical criteria are commendable, I have ideological reservations about the narcissism at the heart of any form of proselytization. Ultimately, one evangelizes because one wants to change the other, which in essence constitutes a desire to negate the otherness of the other. I question the morality of such a goal. Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas argues that an ethical relationship between subjects protects their freedom, including the freedom to be different. In this way, ethics prioritizes precisely what is other about the other (see Levinas's *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*).

Thiessen cites Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance as illuminating an unconscious motivation behind ethically problematic proselytization, because proselytizers seek to minimize difference in order to minimize their insecurity about their own beliefs (119). I would argue that the quest to minimize difference is present in the motivation of evangelism as a whole, since by definition it seeks to bring others' beliefs in line with one's own. I do not think this makes me what Thiessen calls a liberal "closet totalitarian," since I have no problem with people holding exclusivist beliefs (I myself am exclusively Christian), as long as they do not strive to coax others into holding the same beliefs. I also object to the notion that faith must be viewed in capitalistic terms, as something in competition with other faiths in order to be "healthy" (128).

Ultimately, Thiessen "dare[s] to take an exclusivist and universalist approach" to evangelism which is founded on the assumption that there is a moral compass found in all human beings that points to the same objective Truth (37). One could argue that Christianity is by its nature an evangelical

religion in its quest to overcome "cultural barriers" separating people through the adoption of a trans-cultural message of peace and inclusion. However, I was somewhat disappointed with Thiessen's discarding of alternative attempts to "reinterpret and even challenge the centrality of the missionary impulse of the Christian church" (30) as irrelevant to his project. I think a germane question for just such a book would be: Is one obliged to proselytize in order to be considered a true Christian?

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Angela H. Reed. *Quest for Spiritual Community: Reclaiming Spiritual Guidance for Contemporary Congregations*. New York: T & T Clark International, 2011.

Contemporary culture has an appetite for spirituality, but it is not the church that seekers are inevitably turning to. The church, however, has historically been an essential resource for spiritual formation. In response to this disparity, practical theologian Angela Reed urges congregations to reclaim spiritual guidance as a means to grow into God's image and to live out that reality in love with all humankind.

Influenced by a Mennonite heritage and sensitive to the Mennonite suspicion of spirituality as a withdrawal from the active life, Reed moves the spiritual formation quest beyond merely the person into community and mission. Experience as a pastor, spiritual directee, and director inform her practical and analytical, biblical, and theological proposal. Begun as a dissertation, part of this project is made up of an empirical study of three Mennonite and three Presbyterian churches that have intentionally integrated some form of spiritual direction. (Reed generally prefers the less directive term "spiritual guidance.")

The book begins with an analysis of spirituality in culture by integrating insights from sociology. The style utilized here and throughout is easy to read, with frequent case studies employed to bring the relevant