

[PDF] Exodus: Why Americans Are Fleeing Liberal Churches For Conservative Christianity

Dave Shiflett - pdf download free book

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Author: Dave Shiflett

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Description:

Dave Shiflett gives us a book that is essentially a marketing research project on modern Christianity. The focus? Why are the conservative, orthodox brands of faith increasing market-share while mainline Protestant denominations are losing it? Shiflett uses personal interviews as his research tool. And there is undoubtedly a vicarious thrill as Shiflett presents hard questions to figures from both camps. For example on homosexuality, he asks the liberals whether they "...entertain the slightest worry that converting a former sin into a celebrated and even consecrated virtue might possibly have eternal consequences?" And to the conservatives, "If God is indeed omniscient and

omnipresent, why [does] He allow disaster to occur, especially to those who have so closely cast their lot with him?" The answers Shiflett receives from his subjects measure out in words the true distance between the liberal and conservative positions.

Shiflett shows us that the progressive's journey starts by questioning literal Biblical interpretation. The liberal position observes that perhaps we should use the wisdom God gave us when seeking to understand and live by a Book that advises stoning for unruly children. Taking various Biblical passages like these without a grain of salt could leave us running short of rocks. In contrast, the conservative's dogmatic adherence to the same Book begins and ends with the nature and strength of faith itself. The sure belief that no matter the event, it can somehow be understood as the mysterious working of an omnipotent Creator. So the tragic events at Columbine for example (discussed in detail in the book) are not solely an indication we live in a world where people can choose to do very bad things. Instead, they are seen as evidence in the physical world of a spiritual warfare happening between God and the devil, where the eternal souls of us all are the territory in dispute. Looking at a tragedy like Columbine with these eyes reveals that "...God has a plan, and his plan is to turn evil into good."

Shiflett makes no pretense of editorial objectivity. His own views as to which group of religious leaders should perhaps worry about the exact nature of their eternal reward, and which ones will be welcomed by a majestic, sometimes foreboding God into heaven, are quite obvious. But he still gives a fair shake to subjects on both sides of the divide, presenting his questions, and recording the hopes, fears and faith he finds in the answers. And like any good marketing analysis, *Exodus* looks beyond the numbers and comes to some clear conclusions, one of which being that the power of orthodox Christian faith lies in its clear hope and steady assurance of what lies beyond death's door.--*Ed Dobeas*

From Publishers Weekly In this readable work of partisan reportage, conservative journalist Shiflett visits all the usual suspects in the denominational culture wars, with a few of his relatives and friends thrown in. His engaging accounts of interviews with figures like Chuck Colson, Southern Baptist Richard Land and Orthodox writer Frederica Mathewes-Green succeed in dispelling the idea that traditional Christians "have 'retreated' into orthodox belief as a way of escaping the vicissitudes of modern life." The beliefs they embrace are intellectually rigorous and ethically demanding, hardly the stuff of retreat. Shiflett even allows a bit of nuance in his treatment of liberal Episcopal priests, giving a sympathetic hearing to a priest whose affirmation of gay sexuality coexists with her unflinching faith in the Resurrection. But Shiflett indulges all too often in dubious hyperbole ("Whenever they glance at a car bumper," conservative Christians "see one of those Darwin footed fish") and curious extrapolations (the chapter on evangelicals is almost entirely taken up with a narrative of the religious response to Columbine). He misidentifies a key figure in the Episcopalian/Anglican split and bungles the names of public figures, like Princeton philosopher Peter (not Paul) Singer and San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom (not Mark Newsome). In the end, Shiflett's strong writing and basically generous spirit cannot overcome these deficiencies, and this book will do little more than confirm well-worn prejudices on all sides. (*June 2*)

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