



## **GUIDELINES FOR WRITING BOOK REVIEWS FOR *THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY***

J. Kent Edwards, Editor  
Talbot School of Theology

### **The Purpose of *The Journal of Christian Ministry***

*The Journal of Christian Ministry* is a publication of The Association for Doctor of Ministry Education (ADME.) The purpose of *The Journal of Christian Ministry* is to encourage theological reflection regarding the training for and practice of Christian ministry at the highest level.

### **Book reviews:**

Scholar practitioners stay current, relevant and effective in ministry by reading. *The Journal of Christian Ministry's* book reviews are intended to help the broader ADME community remain on the cutting edge of ministry by identifying and interacting with significant educational and ministry literature. We want to draw attention to "the best" new books in the following areas:

- a. the practice of ministry
- b. spiritual formation
- c. andragogy
- d. program administration

To accomplish this ambitious goal, we invite our readers to partner with us by becoming book reviewers. The information below clarifies the procedures and guidelines for writing book reviews

### **BECOMING A BOOK REVIEWER**

If you are interested in becoming a book reviewer for *The Journal of Christian Ministry*, please express your interest to the editor at [kent.edwards@biola.edu](mailto:kent.edwards@biola.edu) Include a copy of your updated CV/resume (normally reviewers will have earned a masters degree in a theological area and will be members of ADME.) Be sure to include complete contact information (email, mailing address, and home and work phone) and indicate the area(s) related to your expertise.

## **RECOMMENDING A BOOK FOR REVIEW**

Feel free to email the Editor with the book's bibliographic information and a brief note explaining why you think it is worthy to be reviewed in *The Journal of Christian Ministry*. Only books that have been published for two years or less are eligible for review.

## **OFFERING TO REVIEW A PARTICULAR BOOK**

Once your name has been added to our potential book reviewer list, you are welcome to suggest a specific book that you would like to review. Just email the Editor with the book's bibliographic information and a brief explanation why you think it is worthy to review. Please do not submit an unsolicited review. (In some cases that particular book may have already been commissioned to be reviewed by someone else and we normally wish to avoid double reviewing a book.) Please do not submit a review to *The Journal of Christian Ministry* that you have submitted elsewhere. We will not accept previously published book reviews.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT BOOK REVIEWS**

Book reviews will vary in length anywhere from 1,000-2000 words. Within this space a book review should accomplish two things. First, it will give readers the central thesis of the book and a description of its main structure to help readers understand the flow of the book's content and argument. A reviewer may give more space to parts of the book he or she takes to be more central to the reviewer's concerns. Second, the review will interact with and evaluate the author's major ideas and proposals. A significant part of the review should be evaluative, perhaps one-third to one-half of the review. The review will relate the book to the concerns of the greater Christian community and keep in mind our particular readership: professors, educational administrators, practitioners, and students.

Book reviews should be thoughtful and fair. You are welcome to disagree with an author, but be sure that you do so in a professional and respectful manner.

Please follow the guidelines, formatting, and deadlines described below. Attending to these important details will increase the likelihood of having your book review accepted at first submission. Submissions may receive some editing prior to publication. Occasionally a review may be delayed in publication so the reviewer can respond to more substantive editing comments. In rare cases a review may not meet the editorial policies of *The Journal of Christian Ministry*. In this case, the review would be returned to the author who would then be free to submit it elsewhere.

Major questions that could guide the reviewing process appear below. Make your review purposeful. To launch your review, get to the point. Carefully craft your opening sentence and first paragraph. Readers will judge whether they wish to continue with your review based on the first paragraph.

## KINDS OF QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER IN YOUR BOOK REVIEW

Of course, not all of the following questions need to be addressed since space is limited.

*A. UNDERSTANDING.* Before evaluating a book, we first must understand it. This aspect is more descriptive and factual—perhaps up to 50% of the review. Summarize the subject matter and contents of the book. Give the reader a sense of the scope of the whole work.

*Overview:* What is the main subject matter or topic of the book? Provide a brief overview (by chapter if possible) of book contents (scope). How is the book organized (sequence) (e.g., chapters grouped together within parts?) Is there a main organizing framework or model being followed, explicit or implicit? What kind of book is it (e.g., scholarly-technical? textbook? trade/popular?)

*Main Thesis, Conclusion(s):* What is the main problem/question being addressed? What main claim/conclusion is proposed? What argument is offered to support these proposals? What are the major sub-claims of the book? Have the author's intentions been clearly understood?

*B. INTERACTION AND EVALUATION.* This aspect involves your professional judgment regarding *how well* the author carried out his or her project, related to the intentions of the author. This aspect is an essential contribution that transforms a plain "book summary" into a "book review." This task is the more difficult one, yet it can become easier with increasing breadth of knowledge of the field and depth of critical thinking.

*Author's Qualifications:* What is important to tell us about the authors qualifications to write this book?

*Assessment of the Argument:* How well did the author develop the argument to support the main conclusions, claims, proposals? How well does the author deliver on his or her promises to address the problem(s) posed? [Also see "B5" below.] Any strengths of the argument to highlight? Any weak elements or limitations to note? For points of important disagreement, did you offer a reason: (a) if the author was uninformed (unaware of relevant information)? or (b) misinformed (in error)? or (c) illogical (a conclusion that does not follow)? (Is the book title accurate? Can you suggest a better title?)

*Compatibility within an Christian Perspective:* What theological or worldview perspective is/seems to be evident in the book? From what perspective is the author addressing the issue?

*Contribution:* Is there a real need for this book? Why? Any distinctive or novel contributions/proposals in the book worth mentioning? conceptually? practically? (of personal interest to you?) Any quotes worth including? How does the book and its specific contents relate within the broader context of books from the same field of study? Is the treatment of concepts, issues, authors cited, subject matter similar or different? How so? What is the quantity and quality of the citations?

*Reviewer's Conclusions:* Do you finally agree or not with the conclusion? Have you indicated either (a) general agreement with major proposal(s)? (b) agreement as far as the argument was developed? (c) agreement in the main with only minor disagreements? Or (d) disagreement with the main conclusion(s). For whom do you think the book was written/target audience or for what use (e.g., undergraduate, masters, doctoral, layperson; as a primary text or supplemental)? Was the book well-written, or did you experience any difficulty in reading the book? Can you recommend the book? Any qualifications to note?

A final note: Do you have any personal reactions to the book? From what specifically? Also be careful that underlying reactions do not pervade the texture and tone of your review. Be honest, yet fair and gracious.

## **SUBMISSION AND DEADLINES**

1. *The Journal of Christian Ministry* is published annually in the spring. To be considered for publication, commissioned book reviews must be submitted to the Editor by

***November 1.***

Late submissions will be considered for the next issue. Occasionally additional editing of your review may be requested which would then delay publication for a particular issue. Earlier submissions would permit more time for the editing process.

2. Reviewers are requested to submit reviews in electronic format as an e-mail attachment (see form guidelines below).

## **FORMAT FOR BOOK REVIEWS**

1. Book reviews will normally be between a *minimum* of 1,000 words and a *maximum* of 2,000 words; specific words limits may be assigned to the reviewer for a certain book. (Note: When you send in your review, include at the top of the book review the *word count* along with the *date* submitted.)

2. Please use the latest version of Word (12 pt. Font, Times New Roman). In matters of format, submissions should follow the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, by Kate L. Turabian.. The text should be double-spaced and include one-inch margins. Minimize software codes embedded in the text (i.e., use left margin justification only, do not use headers or footers except for page numbers). Be sure to use your spell-checker and grammar checker, but do not rely on these to be the only kind of proof-reading done.

3. The headline bibliographical data for the review should place the book title first in italics, author's name [first, middle initial/name, last name; no titles], place of publication and publisher, year, number of pages, and price, followed by "paper" if a paperback [otherwise hardback will be assumed]. It is important to include number of pages and the retail price of the book.

4. On a new line, following the information about the book and before the review begins, list the reviewer's name, position, institutional affiliation, and location; or position title, name of local church or parachurch organization, and location.

5. When quoting directly from the book being reviewed, only provide page-number citations in parentheses after the quotation mark and before the period [e.g., "that is ridiculous" (17)]. Do not include "p." or "pp." in the page number citation or the author's last name.

6. For editorial purposes, at the top of the review itself, include the date of submission and the word count. Then submit the document as an email attachment. Please list your name and the book reviewed in the message line itself. If your e-mail software does not support attachments, paste the review into the body of your e-mail.

### **The qualities we are looking for in the articles we publish:**

1. The content is clearly relevant to Doctor of Ministry directors, administrators, faculty and/or ministry practitioners.
2. Has not been submitted elsewhere. We will not accept previously published articles.
3. Presents a clear idea and develops the idea in a logical and coherent manner.
4. Is well supported with academically credible evidence.
5. The position/perspective of the author encourages theological reflection and integration.
6. Is respectful of readers within the broader Christian community.
7. Demonstrates a significant breadth and depth of understanding of the issues it addresses.
8. Explores a topic in new ways. It makes a genuine contribution to our understanding, not just reviewing or rehashing things that have been addressed in other publications.
9. Presents a position/perspective compatible with Christian theological traditions.
10. Treats other positions in a fair and respectful manner.
11. Develops reasonable implications for educational and/or ministry practice. We want to see how the issues addressed make a difference for those seeking to carry out their ministries well. **This is a critical!**
12. Writing style communicates well to the journal audience (D.Min directors, administrators, faculty, students and thoughtful ministry practitioners.)
13. Employs gender inclusive language.
14. The subject is compatible with the theme of an upcoming edition of The Journal of Christian Ministry.