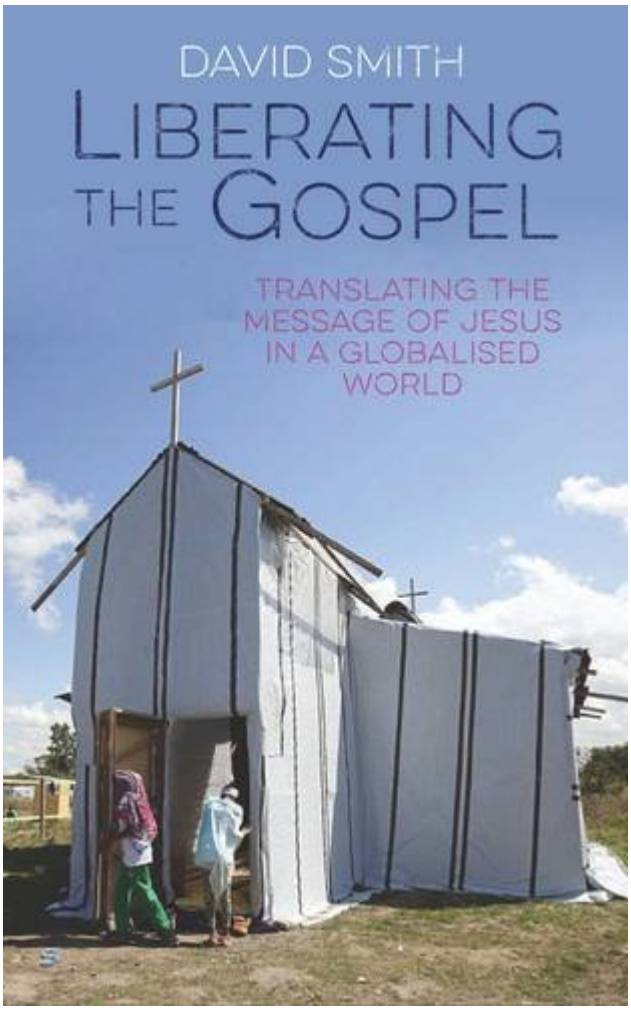
A LOW-SALT GOSPEL?

Posted on May 20, 2016 by Eddie

Even a superficial reading of the New Testament suggests that a reluctance to be self-critical with regard to the religious traditions we have inherited is actually very odd.

Category: Quotes

I've recently been sent a review copy ofÂ Liberating the Gospel: Translating the message of Jesus Christ in a globalised worldÂ by David Smith. I'll write a full review in a few days, but for the moment let me just say that you really need to go out and buy a copy. Just do it. Now.



> *I suggest that even a superficial reading of the New Testament suggests that a reluctance to be self-critical with regard to the religious traditions we have inherited is actually very odd. The Jesus we meet in the Gospels is for ever warning of the possibility, one might say the inevitability, that his radical message of the coming of the kingdom of God will be compromised, its demands softened in a process of accommodation to the spirit of the world, until it becomes a form of words without the power to bring about change. When that happens, Jesus says, the resultant religion becomes good for nothing 'except to be thrown out and trampled by men' (Matt. 5:13). Warnings like these are not issued to the enemies of Christ, to those who dismissed him and his teaching, but to the disciples who loved him, hung upon his every word, and experienced the blessings of his love and grace. That being so, it is sobering to reflect on the possibility that Jesus' words may suggest that the deepest cause of secularisation in the modern world lies not with what is done or said by unbelievers, but with the failure of those who profess to follow Christ to fulfill their calling to act as salt and light in the world. The compromising or abandoning of this vocation, reflected by a flight from the public world to the interior realm of the individual soul, strips the gospel of its power, turning it into a formal, dead or dying religion which is easily disregarded, then abandoned, and finally is 'trampled underfoot'.*
>
> *We might conclude then that the massive recession for Christianity in Europe during the twentieth century and its growing cultural marginalisation in North America, so often blamed on the spread of secular ideas, has far more to do with a long process of internal corruption within the churches, accompanied by a retreat from concern for the earth, and the world so clearly spelt out by Jesus. This process results in the erosion of spiritual vitality and moral*

> *courage so thatÂ what remains is a good-for-nothing religion devoid of 'saltiness' and irrelevant to the deepest of human concerns.*