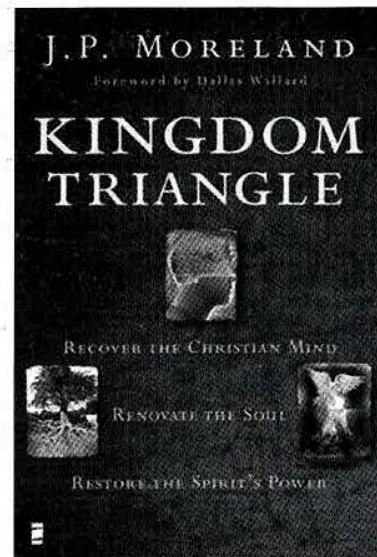


Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit's Power. By J. P.

Moreland.
Zondervan, 2007;
240 pages.



I had to read twice through J.P. Moreland's *Kingdom Triangle* before I could even begin writing this review. That's not my typical experience. This book, though, is so packed with rich thought that knowing where to begin has proved to be a challenge. I've decided to

jump straight to the easy part, which is my overall evaluation: *Get yourself a copy and read it, then read it again. Get your friends to read it.* The points of Moreland's "Kingdom Triangle" may—or may not—be the three most important things Western Christians must do to make a difference in our world. Two of them, however, are very likely the things we have been most severely *lacking*.

Moreland introduces these needs by describing "the crisis of our age:" the hunger for drama and meaning in a world gone thin and empty. Western culture is pervaded with scientific naturalism and postmodernism. The first of these strips the world of spirit, the other of knowledge. Both take away the hope of ultimate, transcendent meaning. Naturalism denies that there is anything more to life than what we can touch and see, and postmodernism says there is almost nothing beyond ourselves that we can truly know.

The result is "thin lives." Moreland writes:

Under the influence of naturalist and postmodern ideas, many people no longer believe that there is any ultimate meaning to life that can be known. These folks...have given up on seeking that mean-

ing and instead are living for happiness.... "Happiness" is a good thing, all things being considered. But if it is overemphasized or made the focus of one's life, it leads to depression, a loss of purpose in life, and a deep-seated sense of fragmentation. In short, it ruins your life. Why? For one thing, there are more important things in life than being happy. There is a larger meaning and a bigger purpose that should be our life's aim. Put simply, we are wired for more than happiness. We are made to live for God's honor by learning how to become spiritually competent, mature members of his Kingdom and to make that Kingdom our primary concern. (p. 23)

Regarding this spiritual competence he has much to say, beginning with knowledge, the first point of the "Kingdom Triangle." To be competent is to have progressed satisfactorily in an area of knowledge. Spiritual competence, then, is not best seen as exclusively a matter of faith or belief, but fundamentally of knowledge. Moreland does not belittle faith or belief by this emphasis, but supports them. "Faith" is too often thought to be a matter of mere opinion, value, preference; a personal choice divorced from real knowledge. Josh McDowell speaks of those who say they know the Bible is true "because I have faith in it!" Such "faith" is divorced from actual knowing, and is distant from historic conceptions of what faith is. Moreland urges us to recognize the actual knowledge on which biblical faith rests: knowledge of God, knowledge of what is ethically real and true, knowledge regarding wisdom and the truly good life.

Very strong counter-cultural words these are. He is trying to wrestle spiritual knowledge back to the status it had before it was denuded through scientism and secularism. Even Christians have been misled into thinking that faith is something to be set *against* knowledge rather than *upon* it. To correct this, Moreland goes into the most philosophically technical (though still accessible to most readers) passages of the book, exploring what knowledge actually is, how we can distinguish it from opinions or values, and how we can have confidence in it.

Competence extends also into developing the skills of Christian living. The second point of his triangle, "Renovate the Soul," has received more attention in the church than the other two, and though Moreland devotes a chapter to it, he directs the reader to other sources for more, especially Dallas Willard and other devotional classics. He presents a fresh and intriguing

treatment of how disciplines can help us tame the sinful flesh through training in new habits. His support of Christian counseling and spiritual formation is encouraging.

These first two themes, knowledge and spiritual disciplines, are expected fare from a Christian philosopher. The third point of his triangle is not. This third point is the advancing of the Kingdom of God by God's working supernaturally in signs and wonders. We Christians are supernaturalists, as Moreland gently reminds us, and should therefore stand on the side of expecting God to work supernaturally. Moreland speaks sensitively to Christians who believe that God's miraculous works ceased long ago, and then turns and addresses Pentecostals who have made experience far too much the center of their theology.

God is indeed working powerfully around the world, as Moreland details with a number of illustrations. The church is growing at astonishing rates in Asia, in Muslim regions, and in Asia and Africa. Most North American and European Christians are just unaware of what God is doing, and especially that he's doing much of it through visions, healings, and other miracles. Moreland is appropriately cautious regarding shams and phonies. There's enough documentable reality, though, that he says we can be confident that there is a genuine—and very exciting—new work of God sweeping the world.

Recovering the Christian mind, renovating the soul, seeing again the Spirit's power: in a world grown thin, *Kingdom Triangle* offers real substance. Twice through this book will not be enough for me—I'll be back in it again soon.

Reviewed by
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The cover and masthead of this issue of the magazine follow this page.

Areopagus Journal

A man wearing a dark trench coat, a fedora hat, and sunglasses is leaning against a brick wall. He is holding a rolled-up document or map. The background is a brick wall with some vertical bars or pipes on the left side.

Uncovering the Secrets of
Scientology

Movie Review - *The Golden Compass*

The Journal of the Apologetics Resource Center
Vol. 7, No. 3, September-October 2007

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*“Areopagus” means “Mars’ Hill” and is taken from Acts 17:19f. (NIV) where Paul engaged in apologetics with the Greek philosophers.