



# Books in Review

## SECRETS OF WATCHMAN NEE

by Dana Roberts

Bridge-Logos, 206 pages, \$11.95

Dana Roberts is unique and his book is unique. He is probably the only man in America who has spent over 25 years studying the life and works of Watchman Nee. He also singularly received a Master of Arts in Religious Studies from Eastern Nazarene College for his research on Watchman Nee, along with his Master of Theological Studies from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. There is probably no one who knows Nee and his teachings better. Some of Roberts' studies on Nee took place in China, which was Nee's lifelong home and the place of his final incarceration. Roberts has researched Nee's final days and dispels some of the myths.

Roberts is thoroughly familiar with all the major biographies on Nee and the large number of Nee's books that are still being reprinted and released. There currently are close to 60 different Nee titles in English with more in preparation. It is not that Nee himself was a prolific author. But many of his "books" have been obtained from English and Mandarin shorthand notes taken by his students during lectures. Others have come from articles or booklets done by Nee. This, of course, presents a huge dilemma for Nee's followers because no one knows how accurate the notes are, or what kind of alterations occurred in editing. There are both longer texts of his work and edited shorter texts.

Roberts shows that Nee went through stages of development depending on what teacher was influencing him at the time. Nee's teachings on the "baptism of the Spirit" were picked up from a Miss Dora Yu. His Keswick victorious-life teaching was imparted to him by a British missionary, Miss M.E. Barber. Nee went through a phase when he was enamored by Jesse Penn-Lewis and put together much of his anthropology from her skewed understanding of man. His metaphysical system came almost entirely from the speculations of Penn-Lewis. Nee also had a short excursion into the writings of Madame Guyon. His ecclesiology and Church teachings obviously were drawn wholesale from the

Plymouth Brethren Movement and the writings of John Nelson Darby.

Nee followers probably will not take kindly to this book. Many revere him as a saint who is not to be questioned. Those who see Nee in a harsher light and think he is off the orthodox and evangelical charts will probably think Roberts deals too kindly with him. This probably shows that Roberts treated him fairly. He is not afraid to show Nee as flawed in many areas and in need of correction. Roberts' view is sympathetic, but honest.

The book has extensive footnotes and a large bibliography. What could have made this good book better would have been an index for easy retrieval of materials.

—GRF

## THE DISCIPLINE OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

by Tim Challies

Crossway Books, 206 pages, \$16.99

The twenty-first century Church is starving for discernment — yet, for the most part, it is ignorant that such a famine even exists. Heresy was not a matter confined to only the first few decades of the Church's existence. And today's heretics often come disguised as pastors and prophets. Therefore, a book such as *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* is essential.

Author Tim Challies writes, "This book is written for the general reader who wishes to understand discernment and to understand what the Bible teaches us about discernment, and who wishes to equip himself in this discipline" (pg. 15). He satisfies his purpose with excellence, as he systematically defines discernment from several biblical facets. He also counsels as to the dangers of discernment and how one is to develop and practice this important spiritual gift. His subjects and disciplines are quick and to the point.

The book is greatly enhanced with study questions for each chapter and exhaustive general and Scripture indexes.

Scripture, over and over again, exhorts one to seek wisdom, understanding, and discernment. Challies' book is a tremendous asset in helping one learn to discern.

—MKG

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