Unexpected Destinations, I put the marker away and just began enjoying it like a good novel. Memoirs are generally fun reading anyway, but I found Unexpected to be exceptionally captivating. The range of subjects—which includes evangelicalism, politics, spirituality, leadership, and ecumenism—was stimulating enough, but when wrapped in well-written personal storytelling, the pages turned themselves.

Anyone who has an average to above-average knowledge of evangelical sociopolitical involvement in the last 40 years will recognize the author’s name. From 1968 to 1977, Granberg-Michaelson served on the staff of the late Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield. He was also instrumental in making the Sojourners community as influential as it was (and is), having served four years as editor of Sojourners magazine. His insider’s view of the “young evangelical radicals” of the late 1960s and ’70s, for whom his enduring friend Jim Wallis (who wrote the foreword) served as vanguard, makes for stimulating reading.

As involved as he was on the cutting edge of evangelical social witness, Granberg-Michaelson remained committed to the building up of the church worldwide. Whether as faithful member of the Church of the Savior in DC or on staff of a small, active Evangelical Covenant Church in Missoula, Montana, or as general secretary of the Reformed Church in America (RCA)—where he served for 17 years until his retirement in 2011—Granberg-Michaelson understood that the church is the locus of God’s transforming power in the world.

The church must be united, however, if it is going to bear witness to the gospel of peace and reconciliation effectively. Granberg-Michaelson’s story is rich with ecumenical efforts, fostering unity between evangelicals and mainline Protestants, Protestants and Catholics, and among Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox believers, as his involvement with the World Council of Churches and Christian Churches Together attests. Even within the RCA, unity was key in his leadership as he delicately negotiated such potentially church-splitting issues as homosexuality.

Under Granberg-Michaelson’s leadership, the RCA has remained intact despite the differing convictions that exist within the denomination.

The most pleasant surprise in the book was Granberg-Michaelson’s commitment to prayer, silence, and regular retreats—Christian spirituality. I knew of his social witness (particularly in the area of eco-justice), and I certainly knew of his commitment to the church and spirituality. I knew of his social witness (particularly in the area of eco-justice), and I certainly knew of his commitment to the church and justice), and I certainly knew of his commitment to the church and
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church unity. But I was not as aware of his unrelenting pursuit of God and how his discipline toward spiritual maturity informed and guided him throughout his decades of faithful ministry. My surprise has more to do with my own heightened awareness of spirituality than any lack on his part to share his thoughts and experiences publicly on the matter (see, for example, his Leadership from the Inside Out: Spirituality and Organizational Change). I simply want to say that when we encounter that rare someone who has lived for many years at the intersection of church, radical mission, and spirituality, we should pause and take notice.

Unexpected Destinations is such an encounter; we meet here a man who proves that Christ-centered, church-based social activism is possible. The only thing I felt missing as I read through the book was a section of glossy black-and-white pictures to go along with the story. This attests to just how close I started to feel toward the autobiographer. I not only wanted to meet some of the people he worked with through the years, I also wanted to meet his parents, wife, and children, if not in the flesh, then at least in pictures.

Beyond this selfish disappointment, the book is flawless. If you want to be renewed and energized in the good fight of faith in an integral, Christ-centered, Spirit-led way (as I was), then I recommend that you get to know Wesley Granberg-Michaelson through the pages of this marvelous book.

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The New Evangelicals continued from page 39

flow of the argument more difficult to follow.)

The New Evangelicals joins a cluster of recent books helping post-Religious Right evangelicals move beyond declaring "We're not them!" to exploring "So, who are we, really?" Pally’s unique contribution is assessing this shift through the lens of church-state relations. Readers who, like me, consider themselves "new evangelicals" will appreciate the revelatory mirror that Pally holds up to our budding identity. On the other hand, being the subject of objective scrutiny—even positively inclined—can be discomfiting. The concluding chapter, "Against Sectarian and Secular Fundamentalism," left me with the uneasy feeling that new evangelicals were sometimes being used to stick it to the fundamentalists.

Pally frames the question driving her analysis: “What are the doctrinal beliefs and political practices that advance religious life, liberal democracy, and economic justice?” Ironically, most evangelicals (new or otherwise) would balk at seeing their faith viewed as a means to a social end. They would rather cite an old mantra: “Seek first God’s kingdom.” Pally’s analysis of the confluence of new evangelicalism with democratic ideals reveals an unexpected way that kingdom-minded evangelicals are doing earthly good.

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Second, despite its grounding in the contexts of local congregational and intentional communities, Living into Community is sweeping in its applicability. All people participate in some form of community, be it the classroom or the boardroom, the nuclear family or the extended family. Our interpersonal connections rely upon the trust and safety engendered in faithful living. “Practices,” says Dr. Pohl, “are at the heart of human communities,” and Living into Community offers a fresh yet grounded vision of a compelling alternative to our often disconnected lives.

Throughout its pages, Living into Community recognizes that keeping promises, living honestly, and encouraging gratitude are not ends in themselves. “Undoubtedly,” says Dr. Pohl, “paying attention to practices is a poor substitute for a relationship with the living God.” Our vocation as believers is “not to try harder to build community... It is about living and loving well in response to Christ.” No matter the community to which we belong, the insights in this book will bear fruit in our lives, both as we live alongside others and as we commune with God.

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Walking with the Poor remains a must-read for those in the field of development, and church groups and mission organizations seeking a more comprehensive foundation and theological basis for transformational ministry will benefit as well. Indeed, as more and more ordinary church members in North America are exposed to the needs of the world—ranging from hunger and the HIV/AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa to sex trafficking around the globe to sprawling urban slums in Latin America—it is essential that we have the proper tools to respond. The principles and practices in Walking with the Poor will not resolve every question one will encounter in transformational development work, but they will provide the foundation to get started.

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contemplative practitioners to move beyond the “defined” or “accepted” theology into regions that grow increasingly mysterious. Yet, while these lives may appear strange to our modern, harried eyes, we nonetheless may draw inspiration from those who took seriously the ancient, ever-green promise of God—that we will find God if we seek God with a whole heart (Jer. 29:13).

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