

*Proclaiming the Scandal*, by Jerome E. Burce

Reviewed by [Wayne A. Holst](#) in the [December 13, 2000](#) issue

Lutheran pastor Jerome E. Burce addresses the challenge of mission and ministry in postmodern North American culture. *Proclaiming the Scandal* describes the Good News as "folly" and a "stumbling block" which is no easier to believe and preach today than in the early centuries of the church.

Burce is a disciple of Lesslie Newbigin and pays homage to current American interpreters of the conservative yet ecumenical "Gospel and Culture" movement. At the same time the author speaks authentically from his own confessional tradition, sharing insights with a universal appeal.

We are a "confessionally challenged" people, writes Burce, borrowing from Stephen L. Carter the view that religious speech is discouraged in public places today (*The Culture of Disbelief*, 1993). As a result, the secularized congregants in our pews tend to be "religious agnostics" rather than true believers.

Burce advocates the importance of following the rules of the game and not watering them down in order to satisfy current theological and political correctness. Jesus is present when the words that rightly tell of him are present. We need to attend to that presence as we discern it in common experience within the family of faith.

The Christian Mission and Modern Culture series from Trinity Press has provided more than two dozen short but pungent missiological tracts which examine modern/postmodern culture from a missional point of view. These books develop the theological agenda that the church in modernity might address to recover its integrity, testing fresh concepts of the church's nature and mission as it engages modern culture.

This particular treatise offers nothing new and startling. What it does succeed in doing is to remind the reader of the essence of the faith and its timeless relevance. In doing this it provides affirmation to pastors who must face "spiritual agnostics" on a weekly basis.