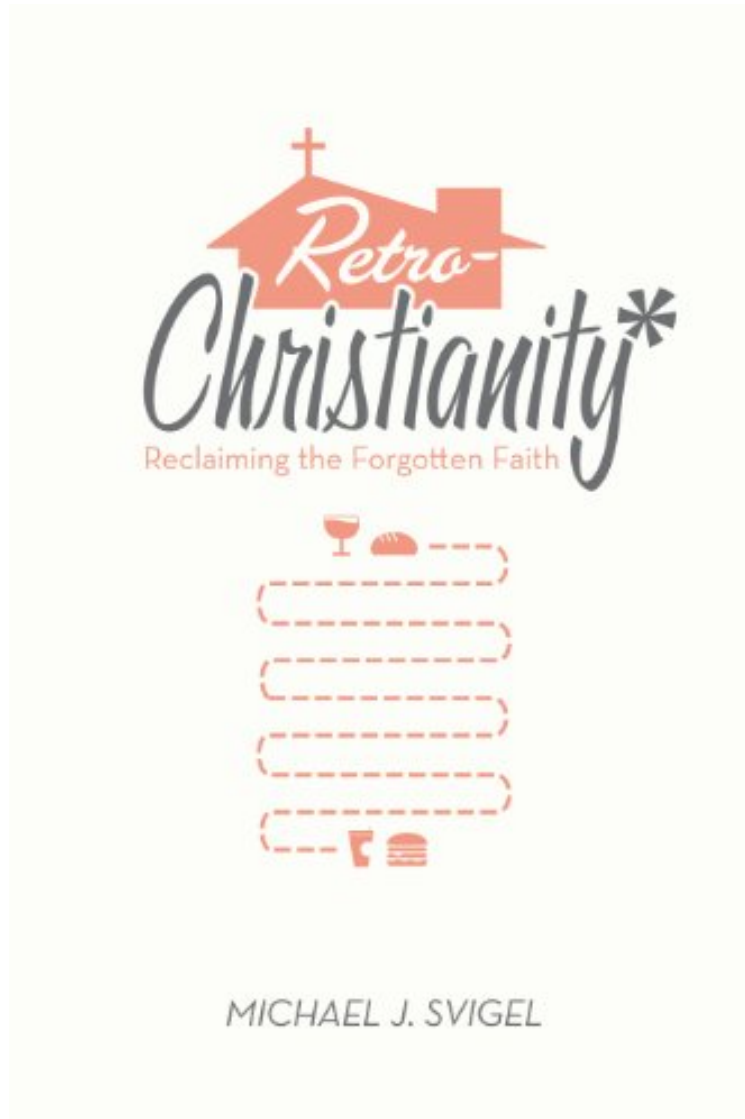


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## RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith

*Michael J. Svigel*

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**Michael J. Svigel : RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten FaithBy Joseph T. CochranRetroChristianity is an exceptionally well written popular level study of ecclesiology. Michael Svigel, an associate professor in the theological studies department at Dallas Seminary and an elder at Scofield Memorial church writes a witty, simple to connect with evaluation of the evangelical church. He does so by looking back to what has

become of the Church up to today, looking back again to what the roots of the church always were and were meant to be, correcting the errors of today, and exhorting the church to apprehend the forgotten methods of yesterday in order to rally a resurgence of the evangelical community to fall closer in line with the churches historic tradition. To accomplish this task Svigel addresses ecclesiology in four parts. Part one traces the story of evangelicalism, explores the problems of todays church, explores how he will address those problems, and offers his solution, which he describes as RetroChristianity. In Part two he offers three canons of RetroChristianity: 1) Some things never change and never should, 2) Some things have never been the same and never will be, and 3) Some things grow clear through trial and error. Part three I found fascinating. Here Svigel reveals four myths and four marks of the church. He also goes into greater detail by dedicating time to unpacking the essential marks and works of the church. Then part four closes the book with a discussion of how the corporate community gathers to express the faith, how an individual ought to think about church and the spiritual disciplines, and how the Christian community ought to move forward from here. Allow me to share with you some of my general observations and conclusion concerning this book. First, one of the valuable features of this book is that Svigel offers insight not just from a biblical theological study but also from a historical theological study. In addition to the ample use of the biblical text to structure and support his viewpoint he corroborates with early extra-biblical resources that tell us what the early church really did and what the apostles passed onto the early church leaders. Second, his methodology is so well structured and his argument for ecclesiology is so well planned out that it altogether becomes quite memorable to the reader. This book will be an accessible resource to any pastor who is evaluating today's expressions of the church. Third, Svigel shows no attachment to what is trendy and intentionally dispels any motive for letting RetroChristianity become trendy. His focus is on what is biblical, theological, and historical: thus his argument is assembled from these core values and is presented with those core values in mind. This book will both challenge assumptions and dispel myths about what church is meant to look like. Now it is only fair to provide a disclosure concerning the expected target audience of this book. Svigel being a non-denominational church goer writes in such a way that this book ends up being most helpful to non-denominational churches. However, those with a denominational affiliation such as baptists might also find this book helpful. It is also likely that a Presbyterian might read this book and find encouragement concerning his tradition's ecclesiology. What will follow this generally introductive review to RetroChristianity by Michael Svigel will be a four part review that will plow through each part of Svigel's work highlighting the work's strenghts and the helpful corrections Svigel offers to the Church. In closing, Svigel writes: I often wonder what the bygone generations of Christianity might think if they could peer "across the fields of yesterday" and see what had become of the faith for which they lived and died. I constantly ask myself, "If the church fathers or Protestant Reformers were to show up at my church, would they worship . . . or run (Svigel, 44)?" Perhaps it is time for you to evaluate your church according to this acid test that Svigel suggests. If a church father or protestant reformer stumbled upon your assembly, how would they respond? Reading RetroChristianity will help you assess. I recommend picking up a copy of RetroChristianity and following along as each part of this four part review series releases. You may find this book here at Crossway for a very reasonable price. View more book reviews by Joey Cochran at [jtcochran.com](http://jtcochran.com). 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The best book on the church that I have read in years. By Mike This book is absolutely phenomenal. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great reminders of the pillars that sustain the church foundation By Hawthron Great reminders of the pillars that sustain the church foundation: Pillar of essential Marks: Orthodoxy, Order, Ordinance Pillar of essential Works: Evangelism, Edification, Exaltation

If the church fathers or Reformers showed up at your church, would they worship or run? The time has come for evangelicals to reclaim the forgotten faith. And this means doing something many are reluctant to do. It means reflecting on the past to rethink the present and inform the future. It means thinking not just biblically and theologically, but also historically. RetroChristianity challenges us to think critically and constructively about those who have come before us and how that informs our current beliefs, values, and practices. This book will adjust our attitudes about evangelicalism, and will lead us along a time-tested path toward a brighter future.

As the Evangelical church in America muddles its way into the twenty-first century aimless, adrift, and uncertain about its identity Michael Svigel wisely taps us on the shoulder and reminds us, Look to the past. His advice couldnt be more astute. Now more than ever, the church needs to find its way forward by locating its roots in RetroChristianity. Bryan M. Litfin, Professor of Theology, Moody Bible Institute; author, *The Sword, The Gift, and Getting to Know the Church Fathers* Too often, churches abandon all aspects of tradition in favor of a stripped-down, watered-down worship experience that eventually leaves us let down and wishing for something . . . anything . . . that connects us to a story bigger than ourselves and our little slice of history. In *RetroChristianity*, Michael Svigel has argued well for redeeming and rediscovering a historical and substantive Christianity that can and will stand the test of time, while being nimble enough to incarnate Christ to the culture around us. This book is a well-researched and well written call to engage with historical Christianity both personally and corporately. Philip Taylor, Executive Pastor, Terra Nova Church, Troy, NY; Regional Coordinator, Acts 29 Network Northeast Many evangelicals are recovering their pre-

Reformation roots in the early apostolic church and patristic studies. Michael Svigel has shown how pastors and churches can begin to implement this recovery and how to think about it. This is a wise and helpful book that will be exceptionally valuable to those who engage in this revitalization. Thomas C. Oden, Professor Emeritus, Drew University; author, *Classic Christianity*; general editor, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* Reading Michael Svigel's *RetroChristianity* is like a visit to your physician for an annual exam. Its uncomfortable. Its embarrassing. Its necessary. And, if you follow his instructions, its healing. His diagnosis of contemporary evangelicalism is tough to swallow, but if we take the medicine prescribed by Dr. Svigel, evangelicalism can be revived. D. Jeffrey Bingham, Department Chair and Professor of Theological Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary When story is removed from history, it may be factual but it's really boring. *RetroChristianity* combines the history of evangelicalism with the pen of an engaging writer. The result is a much-needed and levelheaded analysis of the snags in the evangelical church as well as some practical solutions to get us back to our forgotten faith. If I want to read history with story in it, history that makes me laugh as well as think, I want to read Michael Svigel. Wayne Stiles, Vice President, *Insight for Living*; author *Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus* Michael Svigel's *RetroChristianity* is hard to classify. It is at the same time a book on the doctrine of the church, a study in church history, and a contemporary analysis and critique of modern evangelicalism. Svigel begins by analyzing why so many evangelicals have wandered away from their nests, and ultimately challenges evangelicals to rethink how they understand the church and return to a more authentic expression of the faith one that is rooted in the great doctrines and traditions of the church and yet continues to hold to the core tenets of evangelicalism. Svigel's book succeeds in this and will challenge your thinking! I am requiring it for my master's students studying ecclesiology, but the book would also be very helpful for pastors, church leaders, and educated laymen to help reformulate and recast their vision for the local church. David C. Hard, Professor, Philadelphia Biblical University Rarely does one find a book so rich in content communicated so well. *RetroChristianity* is anything but retrenchment. Instead, Michael Svigel advances an agenda to move the church forward without losing the moorings of sound theology grounded in a history of biblical conviction. His words say it best: Its not rewinding to a more favorable era, but reclaiming the forgotten faith for the future. This is a most worthy read! Mark Bailey, President and Professor of Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary We live in an age when looking like Buddy Holly, practicing the domestic arts, and being a throwback artisan is en vogue. To be current in the present is to be conversant with the past. This trend has influenced evangelical churches in numerous ways. Michael Svigel's fun and rich book helps us rediscover our vibrant Christian heritage even as he steers us clear of many common evangelical pitfalls. Full of expertly explained church history, cultural connections, and more clever phrasing than there were hairs in Athanasius's beard, *RetroChristianity* is an excellent guide for those who justly wish to allow the story and theology of God's historic church to breathe fresh life into modern faith. Owen Strachan, associate professor of Christian theology, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; coeditor, *Designed for Joy* and *The Pastor as Scholar*, the *Scholar as Pastor* I absorb Michael Svigel's work only to slow down and ask brutal questions about the ministry to which I apply myself whether or not we are the faithful expression of a rich ecclesial history, or just one more autonomous assembly aroused by size and success and hungrily searching for the comfortable pathway. His is an unsettling read, but timely and, frankly, necessary. Matthew R. St. John, Teaching Pastor, Bethel Church, Fargo, North Dakota *RetroChristianity* is exactly what the evangelical church needs today. We often lament the issues of shallowness and novelty about the church, but rarely do we offer solid biblical answers beyond these complaints. This book makes the case that we need to get over our chronological snobbery by rediscovering our roots. It is winsome and incredibly fun to read. Michael Svigel does not complain about evangelicalism as teenagers complain about their parents after they have run away. He loves evangelicalism, is committed to it, and seeks to offer hope from within. I love this book. C. Michael Patton, Founder, President, and fellow, *The Credo House*, Edmond, Oklahoma Helpful volumes on biblical ecclesiology are rare. Those that cast their vision beyond the modern and pragmatic are even more rare. This is a volume on ecclesiology, which brings light from the New Testament and the early church. However, it is not a volume looking backwards. It shines light on today's church in a way that is desperately needed. In an era of man-centeredness, unserious about the church and discipleship, I predict its light will send many bugs scurrying for some rock to hide under. *RetroChristianity* teaches biblical ecclesiology. Jeffrey J. VanGoethem, Senior Pastor, Scofield Memorial Church, Dallas, Texas About the Author Michael J. Svigel (PhD) is the department chair and professor of theological studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is a popular teacher, speaker, and author.