



On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, and Stories

Sean Michael Lucas

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A lay-friendly introduction to Presbyterian beliefs, practices, and history. Helps readers grasp what it means to be a (conservative) Presbyterian in a postmodern age.

On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, and Stories Details

Date : Published March 27th 2006 by P & R Publishing

ISBN : 9781596380196

Author : Sean Michael Lucas

Format : Paperback 271 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology, History, Christian, Church, Nonfiction



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From Reader Review On Being Presbyterian: Our Beliefs, Practices, and Stories for online ebook

Sarah says

In the past I was put off by this book's silly cover art, which is a shame because I found the content excellent and helpful. It's particularly geared toward those who are coming into a Presbyterian church from a more baptistic/non-denominational setting, and it makes a positive, non-triumphalistic case for (primarily PCA) Presbyterian identity in an age that sees little use for denominations. It's divided into sections on doctrine (sovereignty, grace, covenant, ecclesiology, sacraments), practice (piety, worship, governance), and "stories" that frame and give shape to the previous two areas--in other words, history. Unsurprisingly coming from Sean Lucas, this last section is top-notch, particularly on the American stuff. It admittedly confirms my bias that historians often make some of the most clear-eyed pastors. :)

On the whole, it's a learned, pastoral, and wonderfully accessible book.

J. Alfred says

A neat, well-organized book on the Beliefs, Practices, and history of Presbyterianism in general and the PCA in particular. Could probably be a little more apologetic, but maybe I'm too pugnacious: it is clear he wants to preach to the choir in this one. Anyway, it would be a good resource for a more extensive church membership or Sunday School program. Good stuff.

Robert Murphy says

This was a fine book, but a tish schizophrenic. SML used to teach at Covenant Seminary (where I am at) but has moved on to pastoring. He divides presbyterian identity into three components: beliefs, practices and stories. The first two he handles in a way anyone would find conversational. The last item, however, he seemed unable to pick-and-choose among the details, so he included them all. The end result is a jolting switch to hardcore, boring history recitation. I would recommend the first two-thirds for anyone considered or new to presbyterianism, while the last third should be taken in small chunks. Otherwise, an enjoyable read.

Josh Lane says

Good introduction to the topics of presbyterianism.

Jeremy says

Read this to learn more about being Presbyterian as I'm thinking of seeking ordination in the PCA. Decent

book, very clear and orderly, not written with much flair. Not super scintillating. In other words, very Presbyterian.

The "Presbyterian Stories" part is fairly helpful, though I like John Frame's "Machen's Warrior Children" article for a shorter summary of the history of Presbyterian splits, debates, etc.

Tyler says

This was a good introduction to Presbyterianism. I agreed with Lucas' structure and emphases. He devotes his book to Presbyterian beliefs, practices, and stories. His summary is accurate and informative.

The shortcoming of this work is mainly that, while he wrote it for those in new member classes, it is often too technical to be helpful in those environments. On the flipside, it is too vague for those wishing to go deeper. This is most problematic in the beliefs section. Frequently appealing to the confession, skeptics will be left feeling cheated out of scriptural proof for Presbyterian distinctives, while those seeking to be educated on how to defend these beliefs won't be helped either by the brevity.

Lana says

It was a very informative book on being Presbyterian. It includes all of the history dating back to 300 years ago. Explains the hierarchy in the church and what positions each specialist holds, the type of education pastors have to go through. The Women's lib and some women's acceptance into pastoral life and the like. The author writes so the reader gets enough information to understand what the whole of being Presbyterian is.

Very informative and moves thoroughly through the different stages it goes through as it pertains to each era. I was particularly impressed as to how long this church has been in existence particularly its reference to Scotland. If you're interested in becoming a Presbyterian this is a great book to cut your teeth on.

Jason Leonard says

Exactly what I was hoping for from a PCA perspective. Doctrinal clarity, thorough history, and a well laid out explanation of practices and procedures.

Joshua D. says

Sean Lucas was a fundamentalist baptist who became an evangelical Presbyterian. This, as he admits, is a pretty common story for folks in the PCA (Presbyterian Church in America - both Lucas' and my denomination), especially in the south. This book is an attempt to make that transition a little easier. Lucas was a professor at Covenant Seminary and now is a pastor in Mississippi.

Lucas does a good job of laying out what he calls "vanilla Presbyterianism" and does so by looking at basic

Presbyterian theology, some practices (especially church practices) that differentiate evangelical Presbyterians from other evangelicals, and lastly some history - both of the reformation and reformed churches in America.

I think Lucas believed he was writing a book for anyone coming to a Presbyterian church that doesn't come from a Presbyterian background. The book works very well for someone who may be moving from a fundamentalist background to the PCA (like Lucas did). But in my context, this is not the normal means by which someone comes into the PCA. Far more common in my city is someone coming to the PCA via the parachurch (choosing an evangelical church for the first time), or someone leaving a non-denominational or vineyard church longing for more historical emphases in the worship service, or exegetical teaching from the pulpit. Given those groups of people, I'm not sure this is the first book I would hand them. Rather than being rah-rah Presbyterian, I'm much more inclined to linger over the basics of the gospel, evangelical Christian orthodoxy, and finally Reformed theology in broad strokes. I could see using this book for officer training, or even more for candidates boning up for ordination exams, but not so much for people seeking membership in my church.

I suppose there is room for a similar book with these other groups of people in mind. Maybe I'll get around to writing one someday.

Debbie says

This should be required reading for every Presbyterian - it's important to understand what you're doing in worship and why. Clear and concise - well written - easy to understand (Reformed faith is for thinkers!).

The stories help develop a knowledge of the history of Presbyterianism - all good.

Josh Crews says

bad cover! We recovered ours with poster paper.

Great first chapter on the sovereignty of God! My heart rejoices when a defense of the sovereignty of God is made well. Christians are consistently belittling God's power. I like seeing such silliness body-slammed.

I'm primarily interested in sorting out infant baptism and hope this book helps me.

Anna says

This book does a good job of laying out what Sean Michael Lucas calls "Vanilla Presbyterianism", or the basic Presbyterian theology, some traditional church practices, and lastly some history - both of the reformation and reformed churches in America.

This is a grew book for anyone coming to a Presbyterian Church that wants to learn more about the denomination, or a long time member that wants to learn more about the basic foundation that the Presbyterian church.

David Goetz says

A solid but mostly unremarkable introduction to Presbyterianism written by a pastor in the PCA.

The first section describes the distinctive elements of Reformed theology; the second addresses Presbyterian piety/spirituality, worship, and government; and the third provides a concise and helpful history of Presbyterianism, with special emphasis on its development in the United States.

Recommended if you're new to Presbyterianism (as I am) or otherwise want to know about it.

Jeremy says

I was given a copy of this book when I attended a morning book study with some guys from Redeemer Pres. in Waco, TX.

Tagged "theonomy" because of pp. 241-42, where Lucas offers a fair explanation of theonomy in the PCA. "[T]heonomy always has had the most allure for those Reformed believers for whom a stress on the continuity of the Old and New Testaments and on a 'world and life view' have great appeal." Guilty as charged.

Another reviewer points to Frame's "Machen's Warrior Children" as "a shorter summary of the history of Presbyterian splits, debates, etc."

Matthew says

A very helpful introduction to the Presbyterian church, their doctrine, faith, and practice. Sean Michael Lucas is a very able and helpful guide.
