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A table of contents for *Reformation & Revival* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ref-rev-01.php



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BOOK REVIEWS

WHEN LIFE AND BELIEFS COLLIDE: HOW KNOWING GOD MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Carolyn Custis James

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001

256 pages, paper, \$12.99

You know," said Carolyn Custis James' theology professor, "there have never been any *great* women theologians" (18). This "zinger" was metaphorically and redemptively seen as if the professor had held the door open for her to discover theology anew, for men and women. James discovered "*all* Christian women are theologians." She came to the growing discovery, not only that she is a theologian, but "it truly *does* matter whether I'm a good one" (19). "I started," James says, "in search of great women theologians and ended up discovering I needed to become one myself" (20). What an attention-grabber! James catches the reader, (75% of Christian book readers are female), by addressing a fallen condition in the Church today. James argues: "Little wonder women hold negative views of theology and put as much distance as possible between themselves and the dreaded T-word" (21).

The reviewer highly recommends this book along with a full spectrum of popular theologians and authors in the beginning inside pages of the book. As a reader, however, such recommendations don't always work for me as much anymore. What *worked* for me was the pastoral concern many share that James addresses. James uses well, exegetically and metaphorically, Martha's sister Mary, (Mary of Bethany), as her theologian in Scripture. Part 1 is Mary "at the feet of Jesus." In Part 2 the reader "will join Mary in the trenches, where theology and life collide and real theologians are made" (25). In Part 3 James explores how a woman's theology influences others.

The frequently-cited, and often-misused, Luke 10:38-42 text, along with our many misapplications, is brought to the surface. James, as the Puritans would say, "raises" from the text doctrine, objections, and applications to cut false notions out of the minds of the readers. James starts with the context in Bethany before moving to America. Jesus took deliberate steps to include women in theological teaching because they needed it. "In their very near future, two deaths would rock their ordered world and shake them to the core" (40-41). James, of course, is referring to Lazarus and Jesus. Chapter 1 ends with the reason, perhaps, behind her book title. "To be blunt," James explains, "life is simply too demanding and overwhelming at times to think I can manage without knowing the one who rules the winds and the waves that batter my little vessel" (42).

James addresses the false notions people believe for avoiding the "T-word." In case one assumes she is mistaken about her analysis of our present-day avoidance of theology, James gives plenty of personal illustrations and mentions a responsive survey she conducted (45). James addresses well three false notions for our theological demise. One false notion is that theology is for men because either there are limits to what a woman can know, or her perceived conflict between submission and theological pursuits. A second is that theology is bad for the soul, and a third false notion is that theology is for professionals. If *theologian* is just another word for a Christian, then the author's goal "to bring knowing God out of the ivory tower and into the ordinary moments of our lives" is essential (60-61) when "colliding with God" and "surviving the war zones of life" in chapters 3 and 4.

James gives the readers, female *and* male, "permission to ask hard questions about God" because the Scriptures give answers in difficult moments. "Moments like this bring out the theologian in all of us. . . . The moment the word *why* crosses our lips, we are doing theology" (64). James, the theologian, teaches the doctrine of God's sovereignty without missing the mark by isolating "sovereignty from the rest of God" (73). James writes, "The cross brings everything together—sovereignty, goodness, and glory" (76). She teaches the

reader the distinction between God's revealed-will and secret will and a bit on the doctrine of providence (84-85, 94). All the above is found in Part 1.

Part 2 brings us to Mary weeping at Jesus feet. Mary's theology is maturing in knowing Christ as healer, teacher, Messiah, and friend. She discovers Christ is committed first to his glory, yet "weeps" over Lazarus. But does Jesus weep? James' endnotes reflect a good theologian. She did her research in the original language to understand the text in John 11 (249). Chapters 6 and 7 end Part 2 as an excellent exegetical theologian on Hebrews 12:1-3.

In chapter 6 we see a glimpse of a woman theologian married to another theologian with Oxford degrees, Dr. Frank James (126, 141). The sin of unbelief must be thrown off because it never travels alone. Other good theologians are quoted—Matthew Henry, Jerry Bridges, John Owen, David M. Lloyd-Jones, in order to understand this sin that hinders. James, however, keeps our theology grace-centered in Christ. "Ultimately the race isn't a test of our stamina. None of us has what it takes to make it. The race is a test of our great God. We run well," she writes, "not because of our own skill and determination but because we have a great God who is always at work for our good" (131). Women theologians must not only throw off unbelief and persevere with "feminine tenacity," but they must fix their eyes on Jesus. "The eyes have it," (139). Theology makes a difference when life "collides" because "a woman's theology is not a private matter, and malnutrition "impairs our ability to function as healthy members of Christ's body" (150-51). Jonathan Edwards' wife Sara is an example of this at the time of her husband's death (152-53).

Part 3 is a blend of wit, application, and exegetical discovery. James uses wit in the use of such phrases as "operation alabaster jar," "Mary, Mary, quite contrary," and "woman in combat." You might say that James takes the "dryness" out of theology by the use of her wit. The author wants the readers, mostly women, to apply her teaching. She is significant in the home, in the Church, and in the streets. She is a "Phoebe," a "Junia," and a "Lydia." In fact, "The greatest asset a woman

brings to her marriage is not her beauty, her charm, her feminine wiles, or even her ability to bear a child." What does James say it is? "It is her theology" (190). Amen! James uses wit and application well, but it is based on a good foundation-exegetical discovery.

James' exegetical foundation comes from her work on the Hebrew word for helper, *ezer*. She discovered that *ezer* describes woman twice in Genesis, but references God sixteen times and military aid the remaining three. The reviewer liked the way she concluded her exegesis. "If language means anything," James writes, "the *ezer*, in every case, is not a flunky or a junior assistant but a very *strong* helper" (181). Now *that* is an exegetical foundation for her good use of wit and applications for women, comrades in battle. In her epilogue, James continues to show exegetical theology at its best. She brings Martha, that sister of Mary's whom Jesus rebuked. What ever happened to her? James destroys the way women try to put themselves into either a "Mary" or a "Martha" relationship to Jesus. Both prove that seminary professor's "zinger" false by becoming *great* theologians. Maybe Martha sat down at Jesus' feet after the stinging comparison of sisters. The evidence that James uses for this possibility is John 11: 21-25, a passage where Martha's theology can be appreciated. All Christians are theologians, and some become great like the one James persuaded to come and "speak to the ladies" on "Everyone Needs Theology." This same theologian once said, "Theology is bad for the soul" (52, 235). He is referenced over six times in the book, and this is some of what he said of it on the inside cover page:

This outstanding book offers the best demonstration that everyone needs theology, the best expository account of Mary and Martha, and the best trajectory for women's ministry in modern North America that I have yet read. Carol James is a first-class writer and has a first-class, well-researched biblical message to deliver. —J. I. Packer

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THE ROOTS OF ENDURANCE

John Piper

Crossway Books: Wheaton, Illinois (2002)

166 pages, cloth, \$17.99

A king is only as wise as the advisors whom he gathers around himself, and John Piper is carefully gathering some of the wisest characters in history to be his cabinet. In the first two books of his *The Swans Are Not Silent* series he enlisted William Cowper, John Bunyan, David Brainerd, Augustine, John Calvin, and Martin Luther to teach him to thrive in God's providence and understand when God seems to be missing in action. Now he calls in three more giants, John Newton, William Wilberforce, and Charles Simeon, to teach him to finish the race that has been set before him.

As with the other books in the series, *The Roots of Endurance* is entirely geared toward the point at which the rubber meets the road, the point at which theology translates into actions and attitudes. These three men not only persevered in the midst of great trials, but flourished in them. Piper is interested in the one question: What caused them to flourish that I might imitate?

Keeping the history to a minimum, Piper analyses these men to see what in their characters helped them to flourish. He notes that Newton laughed at life and himself with "a healthy mind awake to the world and free from bondage to morose speculations or introspection," but at the same time "his biblical assessment of the misery that he saw was that some, but not much, of it can be removed in this life." Charles Simeon, who was the subject of much slander and insult as much from his own flock as from the world, explained, "my rule is—never to hear, or see, or know, what if heard, or seen, or known, would call for animadversion from me. Hence it is that I dwell in peace in the midst of lions." And as Wilberforce battled against seemingly insurmountable odds in the cause of abolition, and suffered under lying slander and nearly debilitating health problems, he was lifted up by a contagious joy. "By the tones of his voice and expression of his countenance

he showed that *joy* was the prevailing feature of his own mind, joy springing from entireness of trust in the Savior's merits and from love to God and man." A friend said to him, "I declare I think you are serving God by being yourself agreeable."

But Piper is not satisfied to examine the "biblical strategies" by which these men conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; he goes further as the title suggests, to the very root of their endurance. What was the root from which these outward characteristics grew?

It is in the pursuit of the answer to this question that Piper really shines. He relies not at all on argumentation nor isogetically reading back into history what he wants to get out of it, but rather he relies heavily on quotes from and about the three men. The result is that we proceed with the lightness and speed of a story book as we examine their inner workings.

And the root for each is Jesus on the cross. Simeon said, "I have never thought that the circumstance of God's having forgiven me, was any reason why I should forgive myself." Instead he longed to behold "my own vileness; and . . . the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: and I have always thought that they should be viewed together." With such aspirations "he grew downward in the pain of contrition, and he grew upward in the joy of adoration. And the weaving together of these two experiences into one is the achievement of the cross of Christ and the root of Simeon's endurance."

The attitude with which persecution and suffering are embraced by these three men is as foreign as it is biblical. "Oh what a comfort it is *to have to fly* for refuge to a God of unchangeable truth and love." Wilberforce is comforted not only by the possibility of flying to refuge, but by the need to fly. They endured not by enduring, but by embracing all that God in his sovereignty gave to them.

The special value of this book is not just that it shows how they met trials, nor even the root of their endurance. Rather, *The Roots of Endurance* excels in that we see clearly how an individual's theology begets attitudes, and attitudes beget actions and habits, and actions become a person's life and

legacy. These men's greatness grew not out of what they did, but out of the sure foundation of lives built on trust in their creator and redeemer.

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GLOBALIZATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Bob Goudzwaard
Edited by James W. Skillen
The Center for Public Justice, Washington, D.C.
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2001
123 pages, paper, \$11.99

This publication by the Center for Public Justice contains a major essay by Bob Goudzwaard, professor emeritus, Free University of Amsterdam. Three others—Brian Fikkert, Larry Reed and Adolfo Garcia de la Sienna—provide responses to Goudzwaard's essay. James W. Skillen gives a useful and substantial summary of the arguments at the end of the book.

Goudzwaard tackles his theme in two steps: description and evaluation. To avoid the temptation of talking about globalization in overly vague or prematurely theological terms, Goudzwaard grounds his evaluation of globalization in empirical description—"the leading factual processes of our day"; "the multiplicity of factual processes." His method is to move from this factual level to the underlying cultural level and finally penetrate to "religious drives."

Goudzwaard selects, among the current factual processes, international finance and its role in globalization. He observes that less than five percent of international money transfers are for buying and selling existing goods and services in the real sphere. The other 95 percent are purely financial transactions. There is a trillion-dollar circuit of international finance driven by speculation about currency rate changes, product price changes and share price shifts. This is a new development in our world.

Goudzwaard then observes how secular people tend to

view these massive currency shifts as a morally neutral process in an autonomous mechanical system of supply and demand. This way of thinking masks, however, that these capital transfers are truly moral decisions by individual human beings and groups. These human decisions, in turn, have far-reaching moral consequences for the economic stability and health of particular nations and for the health of the physical environment. To view economic transactions, like global capital flow, in a mechanical way, in fact is a social mental habit resulting from a century-long process of moral distortion.

In a second step of analysis, Goudzwaard observes that the global economy can survive only by "demand management," that is by shaping people through information and images, to believe it is natural and right to want ever more and new products. A corrupt ideology has hypnotized modern people, Goudzwaard says. This ideology teaches that more and bigger, driven through competition, is always better, despite the increase of global poverty and environmental degradation. This ideology, like the ideologies of Communism and Fascism, have wreaked ruin in human culture in recent centuries.

The antidote Goudzwaard proposes to this destructive, hypnotic ideological condition in culture is a reawakening of Christian faith. Christians should awaken to the childishness of a worldview that wants unlimited consumption, that keeps people dissatisfied with sufficiency. Christian faith should push toward a more mature view of life that favors many-sided development rather than a simple-minded, ceaseless increase in material things.

Specific steps toward a more mature worldview would include government reform of international finance, government construction of global information exchange, and protection of the human environment. These are Goudzwaard's practical proposals in the second half of his essay.

Brian Fikkert's response to Goudzwaard's article questions where the radical transformation of the heart, which Goudzwaard's proposals presuppose, is going to come from. Fikkert points out that the churches need a Christian reawakening, not

just national governments. As the level of practice, Fikkert recommends attention to the micro level to balance policies of working at the international and national governmental levels.

In his response, Mr. Larry Reed develops Fikkert's suggestion of working at the micro-level. Reed advocates micro credit organizations, which provide individuals sufficient low-cost capital to strengthen their own individual, family and village economic conditions. People living in Western nations can also work at the local level of families to raise consciousness about earning, spending and consumer habits that have impact all around the world.

In his response, Adolfo Garcia de la Sienra, an economist, stresses the need to challenge the standard mechanical and morally neutral model of economic transactions in favor of a moral model governed by God's norms for God's creation. In a separate note he offers, "A Note for Economists on Arrow's General Possibility Theorem."

Goudzwaard rightly says at the beginning of his essay that Christians should not condemn globalization. After all, globalization is about God's beloved creation, and Christians are obliged to care for and about what God created and cares about. Christians should be concerned with what the Bible refers to as "the fullness of life" for all people. Further, the Church is intended to be a global community; so globalization per se is not wrong. Thus, the Church should not demonize globalization from the start.

Goudzwaard also claims at the beginning of his essay that "the main frontier in the development of human society today is undoubtedly the international arena, particularly the economic and technological dimensions of that arena." However, a fuller account of today's international society would also have to include an account of a development that is opposite that of global communication and cooperation. This other trend is the on-going fragmentation of our world through the crystallization of very different cultural and civilization centers. Two volumes that describe and analyze this trend is Samuel P. Huntington's, *The Clash of Civilizations: The*

New Shaping of World Politics in the 21st Century (1997) and Bassam Tibi's *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (1998). Both books underscore the role of religion, among other cultural factors, as a factor in dividing nations, ethnic groups and cultural communities. The world is experiencing religion, as the West did during the Thirty Years War, as a cause of division, conflict, distrust and aggression.

Therefore, people outside the churches, if not Christian themselves, are doubtful today that religion, including the churches (which at the deepest levels of belief and worship cannot find unity) can be a resource for international corporate action. Goodzwaard may be right that Christian analysis should move from the surface of global practices down through cultural attitudes to the deepest causal level—religious beliefs. But at the deepest level, many observers today think, the problems of international cooperation, justice and environmental protection really begin rather than find the bases for their solution.

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COMMON OBJECTS OF LOVE: MORAL REFLECTION AND THE SHAPING OF COMMUNITY

Oliver O'Donovan
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002)
72 pages, cloth, \$15.00

Oliver O'Donovan is Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at the University of Oxford. His teaching and writing unite biblical perspectives, deep scholarship and a pastoral concern. His first major book was *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*. His more recent work addresses political theology: *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* and a source book,

From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought. The present volume is the 2001 Stob Lectures, delivered at Calvin College and Seminary.

In these three Lectures, O'Donovan's purpose is to identify the central principle of political community, to explain how representative signs create a common life and to apply these insights to "publicity," an important aspect of modern society.

In the first Lecture O'Donovan identifies the basic principle of political community to be a shared love first "turned outward upon an object" and only secondarily a reciprocal love of the members for one another. This principle—that community is founded on common objects of love—O'Donovan draws from St. Augustine. This love is more basic than either the disinterested knowing which modern science seeks or the choices that follow from more basic commitments. The love that founds community is an engagement with the world in "cognitive affection." A community's love can be directed to more or less untrue and unworthy objects. Thus the common objects of love that establish a community generate communities only as good and true as the objects themselves.

O'Donovan in the second Lecture fleshes out the dynamics of political life by explaining the central role played by symbolic representation. If community coalesces around common objects of love, it involves and is sustained by symbols—representative signs, representative persons, representative histories, and representative ideas. These symbols re-present the common objects of love to the members of the community and enable the members to become a community.

The essence of community, therefore, is communication, and the essence of political community is symbols representing the object or objects loved in common. Through these representative symbols, members of a community "conceive of their community as such; they are recognizable to one another, and they attract one another's love." O'Donovan gives special attention to two kinds of representative symbols, the narration of history and artistic representation.

O'Donovan's next step is to factor into his analysis of political community the fact of cultural pluralism. Cultural pluralism challenges each culture's claim to absolute truth and evokes defensive and idolatrous strategies in each society. No society lives easily with the realization that its grasp of and love of community-building objects is partial, contingent, fragile and imperfect.

This requires in every community communal virtues of self-restraint, secularity, and patience. This kind of asceticism, O'Donovan holds, can only be sustained by the revelation of and hope in a universal society, the Kingdom of God, a new community that can hold others and us back from absolutizing our own particular contingent and historical communities. Sustaining this asceticism implies a central role for Christian worship and faith in the context of society.

In his final lecture O'Donovan illuminates one aspect of modern social life—publicity—from the standpoint of his analysis of common objects of love and representative symbols. By "publicity" O'Donovan means a confusing mix of news, advertising and entertainment that fill our mass media. Unlike earlier cultures, publicity today serves neither to glorify the accomplishments of representative persons nor to sustain social institutions. Rather, publicity today is promiscuous, pretending that its subjects belong to a homogenous, global culture. Publicity, rather than reporting reality, actually is a kind of creation of social solidarity. Publicity feeds a norm-less, socially isolated aggregate of individuals with stereotypes—the hero, the bad person, the good person, the victim. These stereotypes offer individuals some corporate coherence and a common set of things to talk about. The frantic profusion of publicity today reveals the poverty and despair of our modern political life.

Commendable in these three lectures is their focus on a foundational question: what constitutes and sustains political communal and public life. Also valuable is O'Donovan's illumination of the modern phenomenon of publicity. Further, O'Donovan gives valuable clues about the social and political importance of the Church's worship and witness to Jesus

Christ as God's Representative Person for the ultimately true and lovable political community, the Kingdom of God.

O'Donovan implies that the Church, the historical community of the Kingdom of God, is a counter-culture to the dominant culture of self, nation, race, power, and wealth worship. In this respect, O'Donovan is like authors familiar to evangelicals, e.g., Stanley Hauerwas (*Resident Aliens*) or John Howard Yoder (*The Politics of Jesus; Against the Nations.*) However, Hauerwas' and Yoder's kind of evangelical theology stresses the gulf between the fallen creation and divine redemption; they both stress the gap between sinful society and the Church and the Kingdom of God.

O'Donovan, however, is an Anglican evangelical. This means that he believes the Word of God, revealed in Christ, the true object of love and the foundation of all true political community, is present, even when not acknowledged, in all political community insofar as that community's love is directed to real and lovable objects. Thus, O'Donovan brings to political theology today an Anglican commitment to link the first and second Articles of the Creed, to hold together the doctrines of Creation and Redemption, if not also the doctrine of the Spirit, the third Article. Thus, O'Donovan makes a thoughtful, faithful and encouraging Anglican contribution to evangelical political theology.

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LIVE TO TELL: EVANGELISM FOR A POSTMODERN AGE

Brad J. Kallenberg
Grand Rapids: Brazos (2002)
138 pages, paper, \$10.99

We hear a great deal these days about postmodernism. Is the discussion really that important? And if it is

important, what in the world is postmodernism? Serious Christians believe the gospel message is the same in every age so what difference does it make that we understand postmodernity? And how will our sharing the gospel necessarily change if we are to reach an emerging younger generation so strongly influenced by postmodern ways of thinking and living?

Brad Kallenberg, who is presently a professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton, once served on staff with Campus Crusade. He began to realize several years ago that the response of college students to his presentation of the gospel was declining precipitously. Thankfully he didn't blame this dwindling response on the message or on the hearer. He chose to ask some very honest questions and then began to explore the *way* the message should be communicated. He now believes, after serious graduate study in philosophy and theology, that our way of doing evangelism needs a major overhaul if the rising generation is to hear the good news in its own language and culture.

The issue at stake in this discussion is nothing more or less than the age-old problem of contextualization. Every missionary faces this issue when they cross cultural barriers and try to understand the need to relate the message of Christ to the hearer. The first goal is for real communication to take place. The second is to bring men and women to intelligent faith in Christ. What many Christians living through this time in history do not realize is that the context for our North American mission has radically shifted in the past twenty years. In most cases, a whole new paradigm of evangelism is called for. Conservatives will tend to ignore this shift. Liberals will understand it better but will also run the risk of not trusting the gospel story to do the real work of life transformation. To the rescue of the confused evangelical, Kallenberg brings a truly fresh and helpful word.

Kallenberg demonstrates that we can no longer take for granted a common ground that we share *generally* with our culture. Belief in God, in Christ, and in the Bible can no longer be assumed. And rational apologetics simply doesn't have the impact on this generation it had on my own in the

1960s and 70s. To become effective evangelists we need to become missionaries and serious students of our own culture.

Kallenberg provides one of the finest overviews of the 300-year-old philosophical perspective of modernity I have read. He argues that modernity is a philosophy about selfhood—language and how we know what we know (faith or epistemology). These reigning philosophical pillars are now under all-out attack. Individualism is challenged by metaphysical holism. By this he means that a group is more than the sum of its parts. He writes, "In such cases, the group itself is causally real, influencing members from the top down" (21). We are, to put it simply, socially constituted beings.

Second, postmodernity challenges the understanding we have of language by linguistic holism. The question here is: How does language constitute the world we live in? We cannot separate language from the world of experience and analyze it in isolation. The reason for this is actually rather simple. The conceptual framework that we speak will determine the shape and form our world takes.

Third, epistemology is challenged today by epistemological holism. The beliefs we hold about our world form an interlocking set of ideas that we share with the rest of our community. This set of beliefs, or paradigm, is resistant to change but when change does come it usually comes all at once.

So, what does this have to do with evangelism? This is where Kallenberg does a yeoman's work in helping reflective Church leaders get a handle on evangelizing in our time. Conversion is the goal of real evangelism. We know, or should know, that conversion is God's work. No one sees or enters the kingdom of God unless the Spirit works (John 3:1-8). But what does this process of conversion look like from the human perspective?

First, there must be a change of social reality. Second, the convert must gain a new conceptual language, a new way of thinking about the world through hearing the stories that explain it in ways that cause it to make sense to us. Third, a conversion results in a paradigm shift. A believer gains a new perspective on living.

The argument Kallenberg develops from these observations is that evangelism, in a postmodern context, will necessarily be much more about telling our story and living it in community together. Does the gospel, for example, work on its own? Is the message all that really matters in evangelism? Some would say an emphatic yes. *The robust character of the early church was the bottom line to which the second and third century apologists appealed* (53-54).

If we are to evangelize postmoderns effectively then we must engage them in a conversation in which we use their language. "In the absence of an ability to articulate such mysteries, theological orthodoxy has historically contented itself with maintaining correct ways to say things" (57). He cites Augustine's magisterial work on the doctrine of the Trinity. He argues that what we observe in Augustine's argument shows that we cannot explain the Trinity but we can speak about it in ways that do not confuse the doctrine. Adds Kallenberg, "A close study of the church's universal creeds shows them to be grammar lessons, or rules for proper ways of speaking" (57).

The circle is completed when the Church is able to enlist potential converts who will help us tell the story. Conversion is itself a major shift in how one understands and lives life. What prompts people to make this shift? It could be desperation, or curiosity, or even friendship. We need to understand all of these reasons and respond properly to each of them. We have typically seen evangelism, in the modern era, as simply communicating a set of propositions. This is true, up to a point, but the reality has more depth—we must engage a person with a new way of thinking and living if we are to make real disciples.

We have falsely imagined evangelism as convincing people to believe by propositions and rational arguments. Evangelism, understood in the way Kallenberg argues, is much more like sailing than proofreading. It is much more like acting than cobbling. And it is much more like the practice of medicine than that of parallel parking. It is an art, not a science. And this discovery frees many, not only from false views of what evangelism is, but from the guilt they have embraced

because they cannot present a "plan of salvation" successfully.

This is the finest little book on evangelism I have read in years. Every person who cares about the witness of the Church in our time—a time when the way we view the world is plainly undergoing a huge paradigm shift—would benefit from Kallenberg's insightful philosophical observations and his clear passion for the gospel story. This would also make a great text for a class or small group.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG
Editor-in-Chief

**LORD, HAVE MERCY: THE HEALING POWER
OF CONFESSION**

Scott Hahn
New York: Doubleday (2003)
214 pages, cloth, \$19.95

Scott Hahn burst upon the evangelical scene several years ago because of his dramatic story of conversion from Reformed Presbyterianism (he was a PCA minister in Virginia) to Roman Catholicism. His story is now quite common. (One Roman Catholic publishing company has published at least three volumes of such testimonies, chronicling how various evangelicals have moved into the Roman Catholic communion.) Hahn eventually became a professor of biblical theology at the conservative Catholic Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio. There Hahn presently serves as the director of the Institute of Applied Biblical Studies and also as the president of the St. Paul Center of Biblical Theology. He is the author of numerous books, including, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*, *The Lamb's Supper*, *Hail, Holy Queen* and *First Comes Love*.

Hahn is a best-selling author. He is an engaging and clear writer. He is, for complex conservative Catholic theology, what R. C. Sproul is for complex conservative Reformed theology—he writes and speaks in a way that makes the difficult easier to grasp. Scott Hahn, simply put, is an engaging speaker, a bright

fellow, a good writer and someone who knows how to tell a story very well. His repeated use of clever titles and subtitles draws the reader into his points and makes his arguments reasonable and compelling. His primary purpose seems clear—he wants to help cradle Catholics understand their faith more deeply so that they will not fall prey to popular evangelical apologetics and evangelistic techniques. Having been an evangelical makes him quite able in this area. His other purpose seems to be less important, but still part of his plan, and that is to attract evangelicals to follow him to Rome.

This particular book, which explains the Catholic doctrine (sacrament) of confession and reconciliation, is uncommonly clear. Hahn roots his arguments, biblically, in the Old Testament and the Gospels. He explains penance and forgiveness in understandable ways. Catholics who do not understand the teaching of their own Church will undoubtedly benefit from this treatment. Serious Protestant readers will be quite unimpressed with Hahn's effort to ground the sacramental conception of confession in James 5:14-16. As an example, he appeals to the Greek word *presbuteros* (elders) in verse 14 saying "the root of the English word [is] priest" (31). This is a weak argument to anyone familiar with the Greek text. There is no doubt that believers are urged in James 5 to confess their sins to other believers, even to their local church elders. But to connect this to the priesthood is a huge leap. Here Hahn does what all such apologists do—he appeals to the development of doctrine in the early Church. He writes:

In recent years, scholars have acquired a renewed appreciation for "the Jewish roots of Christian liturgy," and many great scholars have labored to demonstrate precisely how the ritual meals and sacrifices of Israel developed into the ritual meal and sacrifice that is at the heart of Christian life: the Mass.

The same is true for what the Church today calls the sacrament of confession, the sacrament of penance, the sacrament of forgiveness, the sacrament of reconciliation. The renewed Israel, the Catholic Church, does not abandon the powerful practice of their ancestors. Thus, we find Christians making confession in the first generation and every generation afterward (33).

Hahn then appeals to early Church writing, outside the canon of the New Testament, to demonstrate that confessions were to be made "in the Church" (*Didache*) and the worshiper "shalt not come unto prayer with an evil conscience" as well. Citing another entry we read "On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks [in Greek, *eucaristesate*], first confessing your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure" (34). Citing the *Letter of Barnabas*, written most likely in the late first century, Hahn notes that the exact same wording occurs. He concludes, rightly I believe, "Both the *Didache* and *Barnabas* may imply that Christians confessed their sins publicly; for "in the Church" can also be translated as "in the assembly" (34). But to make these statements line up with the developed doctrine of penance and priestly confession is a considerable stretch for most careful biblical scholars. Developments in the second century are further cited. Again, the evidence is not conclusive that these statements implied anything like a sacrament, at least as defined by Rome doctrinally. Yet Hahn concludes, "Though the sacrament has been with us from the day of Jesus' resurrection, Christians have practiced it in varying ways. The Church's doctrine of penance has developed, too, over time. In essence, the sacrament remains the same, though in particulars it might look different from age to age" (35). This is a classic understatement to say the least. What is really going on in such an argument reveals the common but necessary differences of opinion between evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics over the role and place of developing dogma and its role in defining the life and practice of the Church in our time. It is one thing to believe in a consensual tradition and a defining historical process. It is another to treat the Roman Magisterium as a living supreme court over Church dogma and practice.

Having noted the error of Hahn's arguments for the sacrament of penance I must add that his book does a lot more than polemically seek to prove the Roman Catholic dogma. This, in fact, is the real strength of the work. As Hahn unfolds the place and value of oral confession in the Church I think he underscores an important element of biblical religion that

has been tossed out of the everyday practice of most evangelical Christians. True revival has often restored this practice, sometimes with excess and harm, but often with great benefit to multitudes. The fact is that the Bible does urge us "to confess your sins one to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16a). I am personally convinced that most of our evangelical assemblies could stand a more careful consideration of much of the argument Hahn makes even if they reject, as I do, his Roman Catholic polemics. Confession was a common and important part of the development of early Church life and practice. About this there is no real doubt. In an age where evangelicals appear to be afflicted with a multitude of ills, both physical and emotional, confession might become a mighty tool in the hands of godly ministers and people to bring about restoration and health. If you read Hahn looking for good insights, while leaving aside the polemical Protestant-Catholic debates, you will gain a great deal from his popular level treatment.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG
Editor-in-Chief

**ZONDERVAN ILLUSTRATED BIBLE BACKGROUND
COMMENTARY**

Clinton E. Arnold, general editor
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002
Four volumes, cloth, \$159.95

The last thirty years has witnessed a virtual renaissance of evangelical commentaries on the Bible, demonstrating that a high view of the Holy Scripture will produce serious works on the text of Scripture again and again. Which new sets are worth your time and money? That is a question every pastor and serious reader faces when it comes to purchasing newly-released multi-volume works on Scripture.

This new four-volume set from Zondervan, a trustworthy name in biblical resource material, will prove to be a great addition to any pastor's library. It will also prove to be a wise

purchase for the church library and serious Bible teachers. The stated aim of the advance promotional material is to serve the Church. After working through some of the material myself I can safely say that the goal has been beautifully achieved.

What the various contributors undertake is interpretation of the text by providing both interesting and illuminating historical/cultural background information. Insightful comments are supplemented by hundreds of maps, photographs, charts, artwork and other graphics, all adding a luxurious and highly-effective visual quality to the volumes.

Included in the content of these volumes are a large number of unique resource combinations. These include panoramic landscape photography, important summary facts on each Bible book, detailed geographic and political maps, historical observations based on recent archeological discoveries, reflections on the Bible's relevance for the twenty-first century, sidebar boxes and charts with historical and cultural notes, timelines, definitions, and an extremely helpful detailed index. Many commentaries have some of these features but few contain such an array in one imminently accessible set.

In the promotion piece included with my four volumes there is a sample of the type of questions explored in this set. Here are a few:

How do the springs that existed at Hierapolis help us understand why Jesus described the church at Laodicea as "lukewarm"?

What does the background and circumstances of certificates of divorce in Judaism mean for understanding the meaning of divorce statements in the New Testament?

How did the Jew's dietary laws provide a powerful metaphor for God's acceptance of the Gentiles?

Clinton E. Arnold, professor of New Testament at Talbot School of Theology, serves as general editor of the series. Contributors to these volumes include some of the finest modern

evangelical scholarship, including writers such as David P. Garland, Ralph P. Martin, Douglas J. Moo, Mark L. Strauss, Frank Thielman, Michael J. Wilkins, and Robert W. Yarbrough, to name only a few.

The goal of the editors throughout is to give the reader an entry point into the world and time of the Bible. For serious scholars this set will also provide a supplement to other useful works on Scripture. If exegesis means understanding the author's intention and carefully listening to the text in light of its original audience, then this multi-volume work will prove to be worth the investment that readers make in purchasing it. Happily, I can commend it with real joy.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG
Editor-in-Chief

A HISTORY OF ISRAEL

Ahron Bregman
New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2003)
320 pages, paper, \$19.95

The first Zionist Congress was held in 1897. At that meeting the idea for the modern state of Israel was born, at least in a serious sense. Two world wars and the Holocaust were to become part of the sad legacy of the twentieth century before the dreams of those early Zionists were fulfilled.

Ahron Bregman currently lectures in history at Webster University in London. He was born in Israel and served as an officer in the Israeli Army. He is the author of two previous books on Israel and wrote the companion to the BBC/PBS television documentary on Israel and the Arabs. He is anything but a militant in his political views and offers some ringing criticisms of Israel in the process. He sees three principal driving themes behind Israel's history: Jewish immigrations, wars, and failed attempts to forge a peace with the Arabs and the Palestinians that can hold for any period of time.

Bregman's picture of the prospect of peace is not very

encouraging. At the present time the Al-Aqsa intifada (a Palestinian uprising) is still part of our daily news. The economy of Israel suffers, the people are at a low point in terms of social morale, and terrorism still occurs almost daily. To make matters worse Bregman concludes: "Israel's society is deeply divided, with 40 percent of Israelis wanting the army to retake land held by the Palestinian Authority and hard-liners urging the government to topple Arafat. On the other end of the spectrum, Israel's dovish opposition calls on the government for a unilateral pull-out from the occupied territories and a new round of peace talks" (286). Add to this equation the leadership of Ariel Sharon, hard-liners' hero in many ways, and the peace of Jerusalem does not appear imminent in any meaningful sense of the word. Christians should pray for peace and use whatever influence they have to support the peace process. When we endorse Israel as "God's people" in ways that foolishly endorse militant Zionism we actually pose a real danger. The simple fact is that somehow, someway, we need to work for a settlement that respects both Israelis and Palestinians. Both peoples have historic and necessary rights to this ancient land. Bregman's helpful history, though labored with details at times, is an eye-opener to outsiders.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG
Editor-in-Chief

ENGAGING GOD'S WORLD: A CHRISTIAN VISION OF FAITH, LEARNING, AND LIVING

Cornelius Plantinga Jr.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002)
150 pages, paper, \$15.00

Cornelius Plantinga Jr., president of Calvin Theological Seminary, dedicates this book to Charles Colson, "who kneels with those who stumble" (v). "You are holding," writes Plantinga, "a monograph that Calvin College commissioned me to write when I was its Dean of the Chapel. I have edited it for a wider Christian audience, but I still write as who I am—a

Christian minister in the Reformed tradition who probably quotes Calvin too often" (xv). Who does he quote? If Plantinga probably quotes Calvin too often, then he probably quotes C. S. Lewis way too often. The quotations are really worth the price of the book, unless the reader is already well read. The author quotes from poets, Catholics, Anglicans, Church fathers, Reformed theologians, and fiction writers, using "reader-friendly" footnotes instead of endnotes. Each chapter begins with a relevant series of Bible verses on the chapter's theme that appear on the first page of the respective chapter.

The contents are broken down following the standard pattern of a systematic theology, but they are written more like a Christian living manual. Plantinga beautifully begins with a chapter titled, "Longing and Hope." This is a great way to invite the reader into theology so that the heart and life are both deeply moved. Influenced by C. S. Lewis' exploration of the phenomena of human longing and yearning, Plantinga invites the reader to actually long for "Shalom." "This webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight," Plantinga explains, "is what the Hebrew prophets called *shalom*" (14-15). The remaining chapters cover creation, the fall, redemption, and "vocation in the Kingdom of God." By this method the reader is urged to thirst for shalom at the beginning of the book before covering the three major themes of Scripture, and then to discover his or her significance through the classic Reformed doctrine of vocation and calling in the end.

For me the highlights within this framework are "dreams and visions" in the New Covenant (12), hospitality as it relates to God in three persons (20-21), God's "endless dance of *perichoresis*" (22), an apologetic against creative anti-realists (41-43), the limits of mere education to redeem (68), a corrective to "entire sanctification" doctrines (90-91), why "God loves adverbs" (117-121), and the privilege believers have of being "a prime citizen" in the Kingdom of God by a fulfilling vocation catalyzed by a Christian education (108-144).

If you were thinking of sending your children to a secular university or to any other Christian college besides Calvin

College, you may want to read Plantinga first. He uses not only Harvard College's original 1643 educational pamphlet as an illustration, he also uses Calvin College's statement of purpose twice (124, 130). This book is *highly recommended* by this reviewer for all the above reasons.

ROBERT DAVIS SMART

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