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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### *WHO ARE THE PURITANS?*

Erroll Hulse

Darlington, United Kingdom: Evangelical Press (2000)

221 pages, paper, \$13.99

When the editor, Dr. John Armstrong, was preparing Volume 5, Number 2 (Spring 1996) of this publication, he asked Erroll Hulse to prepare a major article on the Puritans. The article appeared under the title, *The Story of the Puritans*. The challenge from the editor, however, started a train of thought that has culminated in this volume.

The Puritans have been a longsuffering bunch. They have suffered both from uncritical admirers and from those for whom "Puritan" is a swearword. While it is obvious that Hulse is a warm admirer of these stalwarts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this is no mere propaganda piece. Here you will learn to appreciate men, many of whose names you have never met before. The appreciation will not arise from their quaintness or peculiarities, but from their steadfast love for the Savior and their determination to suffer indignity and death for his name.

The book falls into three major sections. In the first fifty pages or so, the author situates the Puritans theologically and historically. To do this he first compares them with such movements in twentieth-century theology and philosophy, as post-modernism, neo-orthodoxy, fundamentalism, and others. This comparison is not done in

depth since that would require a large book in itself. Rather, Hulse gives a succinct description of these varied views and tries to pin-prick them with a truth dear to the Puritan mind. In speaking to "Shallow evangelism" as a movement that crosses denominational lines, he remarks briefly, "Possibly here more than anywhere, the Puritans can help evangelicals who use the appeal, or altar call, and who too readily pronounce people converted. . . ." Hulse rightly points out that the Puritans held a doctrine of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility that took both sides of the equation dead-seriously, leading to caution in being too enthusiastic over the decisions of a moment (21).

Hulse locates the Puritans historically in three ways, by showing their antecedents, by dating the Puritan period (1558-1662), and, by showing how they interacted with the political and social events of their time. I especially enjoyed the account of Cromwell and his army. An heir of the Anabaptists would have to read the following account with both misgiving and admiration:

That which chiefly distinguished the army of Cromwell from other armies was the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded all ranks. It is acknowledged by the most zealous Royalists that in that camp no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, and that during the long dominion of the soldiery, the property of the peaceable citizen and the honour of women were held sacred ( 53-55).

Has ever such an army been heard of, before or since?

The center section of the book gives us brief surveys of the lives of more than twenty-five of the Puritans, including two forerunners, John Bradford and John Hooper. Familiar names appear here: Jeremiah Burroughs, John Owen, Richard Baxter, and John Bunyan—all men who are still known for their theological and devotional writings.

Obscure men appear as well, among them Hanserd Knollys, a name known among Calvinistic Baptists, but largely forgotten in the wider world.<sup>1</sup> This section of the book closes with the moving story Hulse calls "The demise of the Puritan movement." It brought to my mind a strong contrast with General MacArthur's well-known adage, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." Unlike other movements before and since, Puritanism didn't "fade away." As a movement *within Anglicanism* it virtually died in an instant. That was the instant in which it became illegal by the imposition of severe and effective rules that bound the hands of the godly ministers who promoted it and by the imposition of severe penalties for not conforming. Hulse writes:

Of course the consciences of the Puritans could not submit to these requirements. About 2000—the great majority of them ministers, but also a number of men who held positions of authority, such as headmasters and teachers in schools—were forced out of their occupations. To avoid destitution they had to resort to any kind of work they could find. It was a terrible time. . . . It was the end of Puritanism as such (114).

The closing section of the book, making up almost one-half of it, reviews the Puritans' stance on a number of doctrines and practical matters that the author deems important to Christians today. He makes it clear that Puritanism sought to define doctrine as precisely as possible and adds that it "is impossible to defend the truth without being definitive" (117). However difficult this may be, there is little doubt that Hulse is correct. Among the doctrines that he discusses are justification by faith, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, the recovery of the Lord's day, and the warrant of faith. Those last two items, of

course, have been controversial even among reformed people, but Hulse makes clear where the Puritans stood. Among "practical" matters, he sets forth Puritan teaching on marriage and reminds us of the contrast between Puritan views and the medieval idea "that celibacy is the best way to holiness" (140).

Six appendices close the book. My favorite is the first one, "Were the Puritans narrow-minded bigots?" (183). Using a list in which Leland Ryken cited and answered objections against the Puritans, we find such gems as these: "*The Puritans were against sex. Ridiculous.*" "*The Puritans wore drab, unfashionable clothes. Untrue. The Puritans dressed according to the fashion of their class and time.*" "*The Puritans were money-grabbing workaholics who would do anything to get rich. Generally untrue. The Puritans were in fact obsessed with the dangers of wealth.*" Finally, "*Puritanism was an old-fashioned movement that appealed only to people over seventy suffering from tired blood [!]. Absolutely wrong. Puritanism was a youthful, vigorous movement. C. S. Lewis calls the early Puritans, 'young, fierce, progressive intellectuals, very fashionable and up-to-date.'*"

No one who reads this book will suppose that Hulse is neutral toward the Puritans; he is a booster indeed! I think, however, that it will do for you what it has done for me, given me a new appreciation for these sturdy men and women. The book is both an easy and an exciting read.

TOM WELLS  
West Chester, Ohio

#### Notes

1. Those who don't know Knollys and who have their appetites whetted by Erroll Hulse must read Michael Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys and Keach* (Leeds, United Kingdom: *Reformation Today*, 1996). This book is distributed by Evangelical Press, Darlington, the United Kingdom.

Michael Haykin is the author of the foreword to *Who Are the Puritans?*

### *PREACHING CHRIST FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT: A CONTEMPORARY HERMENEUTICAL METHOD*

Sidney Greidanus,  
Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans (1999)  
373 pages, paper, \$19.95

Sidney Greidanus' new book may be the most important book to be published on preaching since . . . well, since his last book on preaching!<sup>1</sup> This is not a book about sermon delivery or pulpit presence. Rather, as the subtitle suggests, this is a book about interpreting the Old Testament in a Christian, Christ-centered way, in order that preachers may feed God's flock with the life-giving Gospel of grace from *all* of God's Word in a way that is hermeneutically responsible. Consequently, though it is obviously geared for preachers, its clear and simple style will help any Christian to understand and appreciate Augustine's famous quote, "The New Testament is in the Old concealed." I can think of few more richly biblical and truly useful books on the important subject of preaching the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup>

Greidanus begins his book with a simple thesis in two parts: The first is that ministers must preach *Christ*—not just the Law, and not simply God, though preaching should certainly be theocentric (286)<sup>3</sup>—but Christ, the one who has explained the Father (John 1:18) and in whom all the fullness of deity dwells (Colossians 2:9). After all, that is what Jesus did: "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news [Gospel] of God" (Mark 1:14). But what is that Gospel of God if not the "good news" about Jesus? What is it to proclaim the kingdom of God if not proclaiming his King, the Lord Jesus (Acts 28:31)? Greidanus says that this is preaching about Christ's person (who he is) and his work (what he has done on behalf of sinners in his death and resurrection). But he also adds a helpful third category to expand our

vision of preaching Christ, that of his teaching (Christ is not only our Priest and our King, but he is also our perfect Prophet).<sup>4</sup>

The second part of the author's thesis is that ministers must preach *the Old Testament*. Think about it: It pleased God to have the Holy Spirit inspire over 75 percent of God's Word *before* the Promised One we read about in those pages came into the world! The author lists many reasons for preaching the Old Testament, as well as why it has been neglected over the past few centuries (Strangely, the author ignores, or is unaware of, how dispensationalism contributed to this neglect within more orthodox circles.) Just consider this one: We like to quote the verse where Paul tells us that *all* Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). But do we remember that it was the *Old Testament* Scripture that he was referring to, and that it is the *Old Testament* Scriptures that are profitable to equip the man of God for "every good work"?

The problem, of course, is that if we're supposed to preach Christ and preach the Old Testament, how do we preach Christ *as* we preach the Old Testament? How do I preach Christ *from* the Old Testament? How do I do it without forcing the Old Testament to say something it does not seem to say? How do I do it without allegorizing? This book was written to answer these kinds of questions.

After these opening chapters, Greidanus gives us a brief but helpful survey of the history of preaching Christ from the Old Testament. A healthy typological approach that paid attention to the historical context and the intention of the original authors developed right from the start, culminating in the school of interpretation associated with Theodore of Mopsuestia and the church of Antioch (91-94), and modeled in the *Homilies* of John Chrysostom (94-96). However, it was quickly eclipsed by the allegorical approach (70-90), which developed into the more sophis-

ticated "fourfold sense" of Scripture (in today's lingo, historical, spiritual, moral, and eschatological) that dominated the medieval era (98-109). While unhealthy in the long run, part of the impetus for the allegorical approach's development was to demonstrate that the Old Testament, just as much as the New Testament, was the "Book of the Church." It was in response to Judaism, which disputed the Church's claim that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament (74), and Gnosticism, which said that the Old Testament and its God were far too earthy and violent and therefore were unnecessary for Christianity (70). The Reformation helped restore the primacy of the "literal sense," though Greidanus also demonstrates how Luther frequently slid back into allegory (126), and Calvin often used the Old Testament simply for moral instruction and believers' general experiences of God (150-51).

In preaching from the Old Testament, Greidanus says that a lack of proper hermeneutics often causes preachers to fall into three basic (but sadly, frequent) errors: (1) Moralizing (as if the point of Genesis 9 was: "Noah got drunk. Don't get drunk like Noah did."), (2) Generalizing (treating the unique, redemptive-historical events in the lives of Old Testament characters as if they were the experiences of Everyman or Every Believer: "Have great faith like David and you'll be able to conquer the Goliaths in your life!") and (3) Allegorizing (the four rivers in Genesis 2 represent the four gospels; though this was Origen's ancient error [82-87], Greidanus documents how Spurgeon frequently succumbed to it [157-59]). A subset of allegorizing would be typologizing: While the author strongly commends typological interpretation, typologizing is the habit of trying to find types in incidental details rather than the grand events (e.g., the Exodus) and institutions (e.g., the Old Testament offices, the sacrificial system) that genuinely contribute to the progress of redemptive history. Perhaps the

classic example of typologizing is identifying the cord hanging on Rahab's window as a type of Christ's blood shed on the cross since it was scarlet, the color of blood (Joshua 2:17-21).<sup>5</sup> It is important here to remember Vos' admonition that for something in the Old Testament to be a type, it must have had a symbolic purpose in its original historical context (i.e., to Israel), e.g., the tabernacle/temple (Hebrews 9:24), the sacrificial system (Hebrews 10:4), Canaan (Romans 4:13), etc.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to these approaches, Greidanus calls for a "Christocentric" approach/method of interpreting the Old Testament (227-77). The use of such a method does not deny that initially we have to interpret an Old Testament text according to its original literary-historical context, i.e., "as if" there were no New Testament (284-86). However, we must be honest and acknowledge the fact that we are interpreting the Old Testament as Christians who live *after* the Resurrection—a reality, by the way, which Paul himself says is "according to the [Old Testament] Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). We do not so much "read the New Testament back into the Old Testament" as follow the New Testament itself by acknowledging that an Old Testament text is not rightly interpreted until it finally tells us about Christ and the realities of the New Covenant (Luke 24:44-48).<sup>7</sup> We must recognize that Christ "filling up" the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17) has given them a fundamentally different "color" that must affect the hermeneutical process.

In developing this method of interpretation, Greidanus does a helpful survey of how the New Testament authors themselves use the Old Testament (182-225). Though all of the New Testament authors are authoritative in their use of the Old Testament, not all of their methods are therefore appropriate for us to use in interpreting the Old Testament (e.g., Paul's "allegory" of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4

would be appropriate for a sermon on Galatians 4, but not for one on Genesis 21<sup>8</sup>). That said, Greidanus shows seven "ways" that the New Testament authors use the Old Testament, and these become the basis of his Christocentric method of interpreting the Old Testament: (1) redemptive-historical progression (showing how the metanarrative of Creation, Fall and Redemption/Consummation—which forms the backdrop to and is constantly being interacted with in Israel's history—is fulfilled in Christ and his Church); (2) promise-fulfillment (e.g., the messianic prophecies in Isaiah and the Psalms and their fulfillment in Christ); (3) typology (found primarily, though not exclusively, in narrative and the Law: Though we should not typologize, we are not restricted only to those types explicitly mentioned in the New Testament. This is an extensive section that deals with this difficult, controversial topic, and the author helpfully draws from, among others, the prior work of Vos and Clowney in this area.); (4) analogy (which Greidanus admits is more of a homiletical tool than a hermeneutical principle); (5) longitudinal themes (Greidanus' term for the even less transparent term, *biblical theology*. Unlike the previous ones that deal with the history of *redemption*, this one and the next draw on the history of *revelation*.); (6) New Testament references<sup>9</sup> (Though, again, with the proviso that New Testament authors are not always giving the definitive interpretations of Old Testament passages they quote, but are sometimes simply making use of them to support their particular point. Note for example how Paul uses Psalm 19:3 in Romans 10:18 to talk about the spread of the Gospel, whereas David was obviously referring in the Psalm to God's general revelation in nature.); and (7) contrast (somewhat like redemptive-historical, but highlighting the "how much more"-newness aspect of the New Covenant, the presence of the kingdom which was not present before the coming of King Jesus, the

way the Gospel solves Old Testament dilemmas, etc. It also puts a check on inappropriate analogies, e.g., that the Church is to conquer the world for Christ in a physical way as Israel was to conquer Canaan; cf., 2 Corinthians 3; Hebrews 8-10<sup>10</sup>). The author gives extensive examples of how these different ways are found in the different genres of the Old Testament (narrative, prophecy, psalms, etc.).<sup>11</sup>

The author concludes with some practical steps on how to construct an Old Testament sermon that makes use of this Christocentric method (279-92). He gives a lengthy example from Genesis 22 (292-318), showing whether any or all of the seven ways are found in the passage and which one(s) contribute to the central point of that passage. The final chapter contains several brief discussions of other Old Testament texts to help the reader practice using the Christocentric method and to show how it differs from allegorical interpretation (319-46). Two appendices further discuss sermon preparation, but the basic principles could also be applied to preparing Bible studies.

The helpful thing about Greidanus' approach is that it liberates us from relying on simply one way to preach Christ from any particular Old Testament passage. Some passages may present many ways to Christ (though only some or one of which may contribute to that passage's main point in its original context), while others may only present one, and that one may not always be easy to identify! (In a recent series on Judges, I found myself relying on contrast again and again, even though the judges are certainly kingly types, and God's kingship and covenant fidelity are certainly longitudinal themes throughout the book.) It also helps us realize that the Gospel really can be preached from the Old Testament in a way that is not artificial but genuinely arises out of the text, confirming Augustine's famous quote above. The Gospel really *is there!* It will become that much clearer if we "make questioning the text

about its witness to Jesus Christ an ingrained habit" (319).

I am convinced that *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* is one of the most significant books to come along in a long time, not simply on preaching, but on how all Christians should interpret the Old Testament. It is easy to read and straightforward in its presentation. Though the bibliography is a goldmine, the book's greatest weakness is that there is no author index. I highly recommend this book for all pastors and others desiring to teach and preach the Old Testament faithfully with the sweet-smelling fragrance of the Gospel of Christ.

BRIAN D. NOLDER  
Bangor, Maine

#### Notes

1. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Leicester: Eerdmans/InterVarsity, 1988).
2. A good place to get Christian books at a discount is the Westminster Bookstore, 888-WTSBOOK or bookstore@wts.edu
3. The author rightly criticizes the *Christomonism* of Barth and neo-orthodoxy (and as that tendency is found in Lutheranism), as if Christ was the *only* subject of the Scriptures (178). Strikingly, he says that this tendency toward Christomonism occurs in "Christian communities where the Psalms are no longer sung . . ." (*Modern Preacher and Ancient Text*).
4. One can immediately see how this category can make preaching Christ from wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs) possible, showing connections with the Sermon on the Mount and how Christ has become for us "wisdom from God" (1 Cor. 1:30).
5. I have a study guide on Joshua, and the title of the chapter on this passage is, "Saved by the Blood." The destruction of Jericho and the salvation of Rahab and her family are certainly typological. The point is that we do not have to point to the color of the cord in order to argue that point or to show how the atonement is its ultimate fulfillment.
6. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1948; repr. 1991), 144-48. "The bond that holds type and antitype together must be a bond of vital continuity in the progress of redemption. Where this is ignored, and in the place of this bond are put accidental resemblances, void of inherent spiritual significance, all sorts of absurdities will result, such as must bring the



whole subject of typology into disrepute. Examples of this are: the scarlet cord of Rahab prefigures the blood of Christ; the four lepers of Samaria, the four Evangelists" (p. 146). The fact that later biblical authors in the Old Testament (or the New Testament) never reflect on Rahab's cord and its color shows that it did not have symbolic import in Israel, confirming that it is indeed dubious to view it as a type of Christ's blood (in contrast to, e.g., the passover Lamb; cf., 1 Corinthians 5:7).

7. Luke 24:44 is not saying that only certain parts of the Old Testament (i.e., "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms," the traditional tripartite division of the Old Testament Scriptures, with Psalms standing for the Writings [*ketubim*] as the first and largest book of that section) are about Christ. Rather, as v. 25 makes clear (he opened their minds to understand "the Scriptures" [*tas graphas*], a term that refers to the entire Old Testament), it was *all* of the Old Testament that must be fulfilled, precisely because all of it is "concerning [Christ]."
8. "Paul's illustration of Hagar and Sarah, even if allegorical, offers no warrant for interpreting Genesis 21 allegorically. As Theodore of Mopsuestia said 1600 years ago, it is only an illustration," Greidanus, 188. As Greidanus helpfully notes, "The New Testament writers did not set out to produce a textbook on biblical hermeneutics. Simply to copy their methods of interpretation in preaching on specific Old Testament passages is to go beyond their intent," Greidanus, 189. Though this point may seem to threaten the *analogia fide* ("analogy of faith")—the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture (cf., *Westminster Confession of Faith* 1.9)—it is somewhat of a different issue.
9. One very helpful tool that Greidanus turned me on to here is appendix 4 of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* ("location of citations and allusions"; in the 27<sup>th</sup> ed., 770-806). Besides the Old Testament, it also has allusions to apocryphal, pseudepigraphic and other intertestamental literature.
10. It is disappointing to see the author deal with the so-called imprecatory Psalms only in this section on contrast, implying that they are thereby inappropriate for New Testament Christians to pray today (274-75)—much the way C. S. Lewis called them "terrible or (dare we say?) contemptible Psalms" (*Reflections on the Psalms* [New York: Harcourt, Brace & Janovich, 1958], 21-22). The Psalms are not simply private prayers but given to teach the people of God how to address God in worship. I have a hard time conceiving of why God would allow his people to be taught through these Psalms how to pray *sinfully*, i.e., with an unrighteous indignation. While we should not necessarily pray Psalm 137:8-9 against any particular person whom we know today, we should so love God's justice that we rejoice that he will one day repay the children of spiritual Babylon (cf., Revelation 17-18). Granted, we are not those today who are to "dash infants against the rocks," but we should bless God that in his perfect justice he will one day do exactly that to those who do not repent. After all, did not that same justice dash his own Son "against the rocks" so that we could be rescued from Babylon and made partakers of Zion?

11. The author's earlier book (cf., note 1 above) is tremendously helpful in recognizing, interpreting and preaching the different genres of Scripture. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Leicester: Eerdmans/InterVarsity, 1988).

### THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

(Pillar New Testament Commentary)

Peter T. O'Brien

Grand Rapids/Leicester: Eerdmans/Apollos (1999)

570 pages, cloth, \$40.00

From one of our finest New Testament commentators today comes a magisterial work on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Dr. O'Brien is an evangelical Anglican who teaches at Moore Theological College in Australia. He places a consistent stress on the centrality of Christ and the Gospel, and his exposition draws again and again on the reservoir of God's grace and the all-sufficiency of Christ for our salvation and godly living.

One of the most valuable things about this particular commentary is the effective response O'Brien offers to the recent arguments of A. T. Lincoln<sup>1</sup> that Ephesians is *pseudonymous* (i.e., that it is not written by Paul, even though it claims to be written by him; 1:1). One of the many dangers in adopting this view is that those like Lincoln who still want to accept Ephesians as canonical almost inevitably have a tendency to pit the pseudonymous author against the "real" Paul (45).<sup>2</sup>

O'Brien labels "cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ" as the central message of Ephesians (58). He points to 1:9-10 as a place where both of these elements converge and treats these as quasi-theme verses: God has purposed his will "in Christ," so that he might "bring *all* things in heaven and on earth under one head, *even Christ*." This

theme is developed further as Paul discusses the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in 2:11–3:13, the unity and proper function of the Church in 4:1–16, and the various role relationships (husbands/wives, parents/children, etc.) in 5:18–6:9.

Readers of this publication will appreciate the forthrightness and warmth of the author's comments on 1:4–5: O'Brien cogently argues that election is *eternal, personal* and *salvific*. It is inappropriate, he says, "to suggest that election in Christ is primarily corporate rather than personal and individual" (99), which is the argument of much Arminian theology today—as if God elected the Church, but none of the individuals who comprise the Church! "The plurals [in chap. 1] ('we', 'us') are *common*, not corporate."

O'Brien's exposition of 2:1–10 likewise brings out the riches of God's grace in that passage. He rightly stresses the element of "realized" eschatology—the fact that we are *presently* experiencing the resurrection life of Christ (170–71)—without denying that there will be a greater realization of our salvation (i.e., bodily resurrection) in the "coming ages" (2:7). O'Brien argues that *this . . . is the gift of God* in 2:8 refers to "salvation-by-grace" at the beginning of the verse rather than the immediately preceding *faith*,<sup>3</sup> but he makes it clear that "God's magnificent rescue" and everything involved in it (including faith) "neither originates in nor is effected by the readers. Instead, it is God's own gift" (175–76).

The author's attention to detail yields this perceptive comment on "the covenants of *the* promise" in 2:12 (the article in the Greek is only represented in NIV and ASV among standard English translations): ". . . within the flow of Ephesians 2 it is appropriate, even necessary, to include the covenant with Israel [= the Sinaitic covenant; i.e., as well as the Abrahamic, Davidic and new covenants] (Gentiles were separated from Israel), since Paul's distinction

between the Abrahamic covenant as one of promise and the Sinai covenant as one of law is not in view here (cf. Galatians 3:16–22)" (188, n. 139). In other words, this verse teaches that there is a fundamental, underlying unity between *all* of the Old Testament covenants (because they shared a common promise of God's grace in Christ, which promise is fulfilled in the New Covenant) regardless of the disparaging comments Paul may make about the Sinaitic covenant in Galatians. This insight gives exegetical weight to the Reformed theological concept of the "covenant of grace."

O'Brien demonstrates the exegetical weakness of Wayne Grudem's interpretation of 2:20 (214–16), while his brief comments on "one baptism" in 4:6 are judicious (not using it as an opportunity to enter into debates over mode or subjects—a potentially divisive move that would have gone against the thrust of Paul's purpose in this passage to promote Christian unity!) yet at the same time "sacramentally sensitive": we are not forced to choose whether water or Spirit baptism is in view, and conceiving of "one without the other was an anomaly" (284; cf., WCF XXVII.2).

I was somewhat disappointed that O'Brien defended the modern, "equipping" interpretation of 4:12 (301–305)—the view that pastors are to equip the saints for the work of ministry rather than pastors building up the saints by doing the work of the ministry (cf., the KJV)—but I take some comfort in the fact that at least I am in agreement with the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (cf., XXV.3).<sup>4</sup> The author makes an interesting case for a distinction between "pastors" and "teachers" in 4:11 (300; cf., the separate office of *doctor* that Calvin argued for based on this verse).

The author presents a clear, balanced presentation of the controversial "submission" passage (5:22ff.). He rejects the egalitarianism of Gilbert Bilezikian and others. On the other hand, wives are not to submit to their husbands<sup>5</sup>

because they are somehow inferior. Rather, "[w]ives and husbands (as well as children and parents, servants and masters) have *different God-appointed roles*, but all have equal dignity because they have been made in the divine image and in Christ have put on the new person who is created to be like God (4:24)" (412). But just as a wife's submission does not depend upon whether her husband loves her as Christ loves the Church (418), so neither may a husband *demand* his wife's submission (411), nor does Paul "here, or elsewhere for that matter, exhort husbands to *rule over their wives*" (419).

All in all, this commentary is a triumph. Greek terms and highly technical discussions are confined to footnotes, making it easy for laymen as well as pastors and scholars to use. It breathes pastoral concern in addition to scholarly erudition (though it should not be confused with a devotional commentary or a series of sermons). It is highly recommended for pastors, but any serious Christian desiring an in-depth understanding of this magnificent letter will be rewarded for his efforts.

**BRIAN D. NOLDER**  
Bangor, Maine

#### Notes

1. A. T. Lincoln, "Ephesians," *Word Biblical Commentary* 42 (Waco, Texas: Word, 1990).
2. O'Brien notes, e.g., the teaching on marriage in 5:21-33.
3. As did Calvin, but cf., *Westminster Confession of Faith* XI.1; WLC 71.
4. Cf., T. David Gordon, "Equipping' Ministry in Ephesians 4?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37/1 (March 1994): 69-78.
5. Very perceptively, O'Brien notes that Paul says *wives* are to submit to *their husbands*, not that *women* are to submit to *men* (generally).

### *MARY LYON AND THE MOUNT HOLYOKE MISSIONARIES*

Amanda Porterfield

New York: Oxford University Press (1997)

192 pages, cloth, \$39.95

Amanda Porterfield, a former student at Mount Holyoke Seminary (founded 1837), brings a unique study of the Holyoke community and missions to the altar of historical research and to the current development and understanding of Christian history. Porterfield examines the "ways in which [Mary Lyon, (1797-1849)] and her students revitalized the New England tradition of female piety" as well as the way this impacted foreign lands when these students ventured into the mission field (4). Porterfield begins with a brief analysis of the New England origins of female piety, particularly in relation to the influence that Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and the New Divinity had on the life of Mary Lyon and her dissemination of this teaching to her students at Mount Holyoke. The life of Mary Lyon occupies only a small portion of this volume, but significant points are made about her excellent ability to raise money, her convictions regarding the education of women, her battle with depression, and her vision for the Holyoke community.

Though Porterfield's book covers various important influences on the Mount Holyoke missionaries, two in particular stand out: the concepts of disinterested benevolence and Republican motherhood. The first of these two concepts, disinterested benevolence, included a willingness to be damned for the glory of God (19). Mary Lyon felt that this concept was a "call to continuous personal sacrifice" which rejected the secularism of the day (12). A person was essentially working out one's own salvation with fear and trembling. It is this concept that fueled her understanding

that conversion "was a never-ending effort for every Christian—to wean oneself from self-love and to exercise the benevolence toward others that characterized devotion to God" (49). The second concept, Republican motherhood, involved many sociological benefits, such as offering women the opportunity to pursue education as they are the ones responsible for raising and educating the future senators, governors, and presidents of the United States of America (12). Both concepts offer sociological and political ventilation for women who would otherwise be limited by a more patriarchal society. "Christian self-sacrifice was one arena in which American women in the nineteenth century could compete with men and win" as they had more to forfeit and therefore more opportunity for self sacrifice (5). Republican Motherhood allowed women not only to be trained, but also to train others. It is the former concept that had the greatest effect upon Lyon and the Mount Holyoke community.

Porterfield shifts her investigation from these underlying concepts to the impact they had on Mount Holyoke's founder, Mary Lyon. According to Porterfield, Lyon began Mount Holyoke with these two factors guiding her life and the lives of her students. Mount Holyoke's religious community was based on benevolence as a way to maintain "social cohesion" (32). This provided the lives of Holyoke women with a stability in that each woman sought the benefit of the other.

Porterfield demonstrates how Lyon's students carried this understanding into foreign missions. She examines especially three major mission fields: the Nestorians in Persia (chapter 4), the people of India with their Hindu foundation (chapter 5), and the Zulus of Natal in Southeast Africa (chapter 6). Porterfield finds that while on the mission field, Mount Holyoke women failed in many ways. She writes, "In Persia, American missionary efforts to

reform Nestorian culture led to the decline of that culture. In Maharashtra, American missionary efforts to promote female literacy contributed to a revitalization of Hinduism; and in Natal, American missionary education helped establish an African Christian elite that rebelled against missionary churches" (140). Porterfield posits several reasons for this conclusion. One of the prevailing reasons comes from a preference for pluralism which Porterfield exhibits. Porterfield finds fault with the "religious elitism" found among New England Protestant women which brought or imposed western Protestantism on the mission field (140). She appears unsatisfied with those she analyzes because they did not live up to modern American standards of tolerance. In a context of intolerance, as Porterfield mentions frequently, these women were exercising their understanding of postmillennialism in which they were a part of the movement to usher in the future millennial reign of Christ over his Church. This victorious reign over the world through the Church would include the crushing of the enemies of Christ, including Rome, Islam and various pagan religions. To missionaries with this theological mindset, the pluralistic toleration that Porterfield suggests they needed would have been like signing a treaty with the very enemy from which they sought to deliver others.

Porterfield is right in acknowledging that "true" benevolence should have ended all forms of "arrogance involved in their disdain for other beliefs," and cordiality should have existed more prominently. But in her analysis of their ethnocentricity, it is helpful to be reminded that Edwards taught in *The History of the Work of Redemption* (preached in 1739, but published posthumously) that it would be America that God would use as a beacon of the Gospel to bring other nations to him. Porterfield resolves that self-sacrifice "skewed missionary thinking, making it possible for missionaries to overlook the arrogance involved in their

disdain for other beliefs and to overlook the conflict between this disdain and their commitment to benevolence" (141). Concerning the missionary influence in Persia, Porterfield's conclusion that "in Persia, American missionary efforts to reform Nestorian culture led to the decline of that culture" may be overstating one side of the issue, reducing what was probably caused by several factors to one broad statement. For example, it appears that unusual amounts of hardships for the Nestorians were also due to a lack of plurality among the Muslims who did not welcome the changes brought about in their society by Christian missionaries (81-82).

The Christian historian will find this book's pluralism difficult to accept. This is not to say that Christians should not be tactful and cordial to those of other beliefs, but pluralism which treats all religions as truth to be sought is not the message of the religion that claims to be "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

A similar problem with Porterfield's analysis is uncovered in a brief note she makes of an instance where Lyon mentions the deep love she has for Miss Polly Grant. Porterfield concludes that this reference must have been to a sexual attraction (52). Though such an interpretation is possible, the wording does not necessitate it. It seems probable that just as Porterfield's struggle with the lack of pluralism among these missionary women demonstrates a form of anachronism, she could also be reading contemporary twentieth-century language of sexual intimacy into Lyon's nineteenth-century words of a relationship that is merely platonic.

Aside from these criticisms, there are a number of beneficial aspects of this book. Porterfield's work advances our understanding of the effect that Christian female missionaries had on the mission field. Christian historians would find this book a helpful guide into the methods female

missionaries found effective and viable for their gender. As Porterfield indicates, current feminist scholarship tends to find the egalitarian nature of these women unsatisfying. She writes, "the selflessness embraced by antebellum missionary women locates them at a considerable distance from the commitments of present-day feminists" who have found such selflessness to be a matter of oppression rather than an opportunity for expression (27). But with disinterested benevolence as a motivator, these women could often excel above men in sacrifice (5), and Republican motherhood offered many opportunities for women to seek an education in a society which favored male education.

In the arena of the history of Christian thought, Porterfield demonstrates the development of a theology of self-sacrifice or mortification. The denial of self, even to the point of death, finds its way into most of Porterfield's presentation of Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke community. Along with this denial came benevolent acts by which many, including Mary Lyon herself, were able to combat bouts of melancholy. Busy, benevolent activity left Mary Lyon "no time for depression" (53).

Another interesting benefit of this book is the way Porterfield advances the effect of Jonathan Edwards and the New Divinity outside of New England. Studies of Edwards' influence outside of New England are often limited to his Scottish connection, but Porterfield demonstrates the breadth of Edwards' effect on other cultures through the subculture of Holyoke missionaries. In essence, Porterfield demonstrates what appears to be regularly recognized by Christian historians and theologians, that Jonathan Edwards' name should be included with the names of John Calvin and Thomas Aquinas in terms of influential character. However, in reference to certain theological matters, Porterfield could have benefited from a better understanding of Edwards. For example, she compares the Hindu

metaphysical understanding of "world consciousness" with Edwards' metaphysical speculations on the world as a part of the divine being. However, Edwards did not believe that a person was seemingly absorbed into a "world consciousness" or into the divine, essentially leaving one less than an individual. Rather, as has been demonstrated in Sang Hyun Lee's book, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, Edwards teaches a concept of disposition which allows one to maintain an individuality within God's sovereign realm.

On a similar point, by demonstrating how Jonathan Edwards' *History of the Work of Redemption* was such a large influence upon the lives of Mary Lyon and her students, Porterfield gives one a picture of missionary vision in which one is part of a history which is unfolded by a sovereign God. As Porterfield demonstrates throughout her book, the missionaries believed that God works all things to his end, ultimately resulting in the missionaries playing a vital role in the history of redemption, as they are the means by which God accomplished his tasks. This is a view of history often foreign to a more sociological presentation of history found today. For example, Porterfield writes that "exploration and trade had precipitated a widespread loss of faith in the old deities and taboos, and this disenchantment made the New Divinity ideas of salvation and damnation more compelling to Pacific Islanders than they otherwise would have been" (20). However, from the perspective of the New Divinity, this would be the means or second cause by which God brought persons to salvation as he prepares the world for the future millennial kingdom. Though the social factors Porterfield credits are legitimate points for historical analysis, from the enthusiastic post-millennial perspective of the Holyoke missionaries, the greatest understanding of a situation is that God is working out his plan for redemption. Despite these minor points in her presentation of Jonathan Edwards, Porterfield gives a

helpful analysis of Edwards' role in the theology and lives of Mount Holyoke missionaries.

Porterfield accomplishes the difficult task of adventuring where many historians have not. She delivers a valuable work which demonstrates the effect women have had on other cultures, especially in cultures where women have had fewer freedoms than those from America. Yet Porterfield does not pretend that her book is the end of all work to be done in this area. *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* brings a fresh and challenging analysis to the world of women in missions and the life they carved for themselves in society.

BRANDON WITHROW  
Temperance, Michigan

### *THE AWAKENING: ONE MAN'S BATTLE WITH DARKNESS*

Friedrich Zuendel

Farmington, Pennsylvania: The Plough Publishing House  
(1999)

147 pages, paper, \$10.00

What an explosive book! It provokes, startles, and stirs up the reader to question his faith in the living God through biographical accounts of spiritual warfare, awakening, and healing. I found the Plough Publishers very congenial and genuinely concerned for the best use of this little book that has been offered free to evangelical pastors across North America. They have written up a separate brochure which includes open-ended helpful questions for group discussion—"Reflection Questions"—along with "a partial List of Scripture passages on various related themes contained in *The Awakening*." In talking with them over the phone, I came to appreciate their desire to let Pastor

Blumhardt's recorded experiences speak for themselves. And, apart from Gunter Kruger's overview, it does.

It was Friedrich Zuendel (1827-1891), the Swiss pastor, author, and essayist who wrote this landmark biography of Johann Christopy Blumhardt first published in 1880. *The Awakening* is a recent publication of the prominent parts of the original work that, I am told by the editors, still allures thousands each year to visit the village of Mottlingen, Germany. On more than a historical level, this account of spiritual awakening calls for our critical attention.

*The Awakening* is divided into three major parts: The Fight, The Awakening, and Miracles. These are preceded by the editor's preface and an overview by Gunter Kruger. Kruger's intention is to use this biographical experience to call the modern Church out of skepticism regarding satanic forces, which is trivializing the reality of evil. It is Kruger, not Blumhardt, who writes, "The building up of the Church in Mottlingen did not begin with preaching but, as Blumhardt put it, with struggle, prayer, and finally, victory over 'personalities of darkness'" (12). Friedrich Zuendel seems to argue differently in the opening section, "The Awakening": "To Blumhardt, Mottlingen's significance lay in the change experienced *after* the fight, *not* in the notoriety it gained because of the fight itself" (67, emphasis added by reviewer).

### THE FIGHT

For sure "a spiritual struggle" which Blumhardt referred to the rest of his life as "the fight" engendered a sober mood in his congregation. Although the fight was real and can wrongly be denied, we must examine experience through the lens of Scripture. Are we to believe that the words of one of the demons spoken to Blumhardt mysteriously appeared, painted, on a shutter of Gottliebin Dittus' house in the village of Mottlingen during her fight against demonic powers,

1841-1843? The plaque itself, which was made later, still hangs on the house. The weatherworn inscription reads:

Mensch: bedenk die Ewigkeit,  
und spotte nicht der Gnadenzeit,  
denn das Gericht ist nicht mehr weit.

Man, think on eternity,  
And do not mock the time of grace,  
For judgement is not far off (7, 8, 25, 49).

Did Blumhardt have a conversation with an audible voice of a dead widow who spoke through Gottliebin's body (39-41)? Shouldn't we question this at some level without being labeled an unbelieving skeptic? Is it true that "most of the demons" out of the 1,067 "desperately yearned for liberation from the bonds of Satan"? Is it true that they were using "various languages to express themselves, including Italian, French, German, *and other languages* which Blumhardt could not recognize" (49)? What shall we think?

It is good for the Church to be sobered by such an account of the reality of spiritual conflict since we have been too often of the back lines and uninformed as to the nature of the corporate warfare in which we are engaged (Ephesians 6:12). However, when we view the fight as exclusively supernatural, the consequence is to remove the battle to a sphere of existence that is alien to the daily, ordinary, normal struggles of most people. If the war is merely an "ism" or a faceless group, then the average believer is again disconnected from the fight. The real fight is supernatural and is against the forces arrayed against God and his people. Evil is working through the basic structures of all ideologies, social structures, institutions, and events—namely *people*. Satan is constantly working through the

dynamics of one person relating to another. The sphere of the eternal, spiritual war is *the battleground of relationships*. We cannot make a moral, ethical, or relational decision without engaging in a contest of supernatural proportions. An account such as this should not lead us to believe that in order to really engage in the reality of spiritual warfare, we must converse with demons speaking through others.

The New Testament never uses language that suggests that a demon actually "possesses" someone. This would imply that people under demonic attack have no choice but to succumb to it. The Greek word *daimonizomai* means to "have a demon." The worst case of a person having many demons recorded in Scripture was the Gerasene demonic who was restored "in his right mind" (Mark 5:1-20). This account does claim to be much worse with Gottlieb Dittus, and she, too, was restored. Jesus gave his disciples authority over demons (Luke 9:1, 10:17; Acts 8:7, 16-18), and Mary Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, supported his ministry financially (Luke 8:1-3).

There is a danger of reading into this account that only one with Blumhardt's prayer life or piety has this authority over demons. His ultimate basis, however, is not a man's piety, but the completed work of Christ on the cross (Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 2:15). Simply rebuke the demon in the name of Jesus and command it to leave. This account makes much of the weapons of prayer and faith, but little of the devastating weapons of the Word, the sacraments, and loving well. "The fight" came to a decisive end on Christmas 1843 after two years of struggle (57-59). The reader should not be led to think that after "the fight," the lifelong fight goes away or becomes less intense in an awakening. By Easter 1844 came "the awakening" (7).

#### THE AWAKENING

This is the best part of the book because it records the

true marks of a biblical revival and reformation. The first harbinger of the awakening showed itself in Blumhardt's confirmation classes. A former troublemaker weeps over forgiveness of his sins (68); sins are confessed—"One after another, they are coming to me and confessing their sins" (69); prayer—"some of the boys even began meeting in one or the other house to pray" (70); and repentance of sin is greatly evidenced (75). Blumhardt wrote to a friend, "Imagine! Yesterday I heard that all twenty-four members of my confirmation class have been meeting daily on their own. They sing, read from the Bible, and pray on their knees, with everyone taking a turn" (77).

The awakening was marked by Spirit-empowered preaching from the Bible in a soul-searching way (87), large crowds for worship (81-82), the priesthood of every believer in action (83, 85), and a God-centeredness that was accompanied by godly seriousness. Zuendel writes,

Amazingly, the extravagant emotionalism often associated with so-called revivals was completely absent in Mottlingen. Nor were there the public avowals of repentance and declarations of wickedness. This awakening was too serious for that, too deeply rooted in reality. People were driven by an inner compulsion (84).

It is a beautiful account of what God can do in a short period of time through a loving pastor-teacher concerned for genuine repentance (88), a New Covenant eschatology (85), and the distinctive feature of the forgiveness of sins proclaimed through the cross of Christ (71-73, 89, 99). It is an amazing account of the power of God manifested in healing people, which brings us to the final section of the book.

#### MIRACLES

In this section there are listed over eleven accounts of



healing. People reported that God healed them of such ailments as rheumatism (105), the pain of being scalded all over a child's body (106), a "severe eye disease" (107), a hunched back, poor eyesight, tuberculosis (108), a paralyzing spinal infection (109), both physical and mental problems (111), inability to speak for a time (116), and a convulsively clutched hand (127).

There are potential dangers with a term like "miracles." In developing an apologetic for miracles a proper definition must be formulated. Such a term only adds to the confusion regarding a biblical perspective on healing. To cloak it in Aristotelian terminology, the substance and the accidents are immutably joined together. Many could give accounts of substantial healing that God mercifully wrought for our comfort, encouragement, and strength which would glorify his name, but we would not all call them miracles.

It is important to note that superstitious practices were prevalent in the Mottlingen area at that time. "Blumhardt's parishioners often told him of superstitious attempts—from sorcery to subtler forms of 'sympathetic' magic—to find cures for their aches and pains" (106). He often urged them not to engage in these practices, but to see a doctor which required too much money and long trips from home.

Blumhardt met with much resistance from his fellow colleagues. In January 1846 the ministry forbade him to "include healing as part of his pastoral duty instead of directing people to the medical profession" (121). Later he was officially reprimanded for disobedience over this (125).

Blumhardt wrestled with the veracity of Scripture and of what they were experiencing. Many who were healed found their afflictions returned. Zuendel writes, "Such reversal of healing did occur at times, and though it pained Blumhardt, it did not surprise him. He regarded any divine help he received merely as a foretaste of what was to come"

(128). Here we find him in the bounds of orthodoxy. He avoided the three major mistakes listed in Wayne A. Grudem's recent and popular systematic theology. He avoided *not praying for healing at all*. He avoided *telling people God seldom heals at all*. And he did not tell folks that *God always heals today*. Often God empowers his people to suffer well. (see *Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1999), 416.

This is a book for pastor-teachers to investigate with a heart for revival and reformation. Its usefulness will depend on how wise shepherds fashion their convictions about spiritual warfare under the internal influence of the Holy Spirit working by and with the Word. Reading it can mislead the naïve. The modern mind may not only wrongly reject such an account due to an unholy skepticism of the reality of evil, that same mind may also embrace such a book because of the closing of the American mind to objective truth. Theologian Rudolph Bultmann writes, "I detest those Blumhardt stories!" (3).

Any fool can be a skeptic, but the Holy Spirit is no skeptic according to Luther. This is an account, like every revival account, that calls for the skeptics to be skeptical of their skepticism and join the spiritual battle for truth which transforms contemporary people by the renewing of our minds.

ROBERT DAVIS SMART  
Normal, Illinois

**THE ACT OF BIBLE READING: A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY  
APPROACH TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**

Elmer Dyck, editor

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1996)

182 pages, paper, \$12.99

I have always had a funny suspicion that if I hosted a party for the people who have influenced me the most, the group wouldn't quite get along with each other. And yet, I certainly wouldn't want to leave any of these friends uninvited. A similar thought occurred to me after reading *The Act of Bible Reading*, written by members of the faculty at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. While I have no doubt that the contributors to this book share a mutual appreciation as colleagues and fellow Christians, the respective disciplines they represent quite often do not get along with each other. Biblical theology grows uneasy with the categories of the systematician. Systematic theology warns against the mystical vagaries of spiritual theology. Spiritual theology cautions against the embalming of the text by both the biblical and systematic theologians. Throw into the mix a philosophical theologian and you can see how the party might implode.

Thankfully, there are no cocktail fights here. Rather, the multi-disciplinary approach of *The Act of Bible Reading* is an occasion for some stimulating conversation among friends who would desire that we hear more clearly the voice of God as it is mediated in the Book he has authored. Each makes suggestions, and each should be heard—for as Eugene Peterson tells us in his foreword, “Historically Christians have been as concerned about *how* we read the Bible as *that* we read it” (8).

Gordon Fee begins the book with a chapter on “History as Context for Interpretation.” The able New Testament exegete illustrates from two passages in 1 Corinthians

(3:10-17; 11:17-34) the historical awareness that is necessary for a sympathetic reading of the author's intent. This case study is helpful as Fee shows how a misreading of the original context can lead to misapplication and miscommunication in a subsequent context such as our own. Fee argues that, if we are going to say what this passage means *now*, we must be diligent to understand what this text meant *then*. (See Fee's book, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, for an expanded discussion.) If we are to preach and believe with authority the message of God's Word, we must pursue an *Author-ized* reading of that message.

Elmer Dyck continues the exploration of biblical interpretation with an essay on a canonical approach to reading Scripture. Dyck's essay is quite timely as the question regarding the New Testament's use of the Old Testament looms large in current biblical scholarship. Perhaps, like me, you have questioned how the early Christian writers read the Old Testament texts. They certainly do not appear to us as well-schooled models of evangelical hermeneutics. Whereas we are taught to be suspicious of allegory and typology as a seedbed for all sorts of interpretive weeds, our forbears in the faith seemed quite adept at causing Christ to sprout up from across the Old Testament soil. Dyck shows how it is possible and essential for a Christian to read the Bible with recognition of its multiple levels of meaning. Using the example in Isaiah 7:14 of the sign that will be associated with the birth of a child, Dyck shows how a text can have meaning in its original context as well as in the expanding contexts in which later authors appropriate the original story. Such an approach shows serious interest in the original historical context but is also sensitive to the later readings of the early Christian community of faith. Thus, one can rightly identify the child to be given as a sign as *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz* (the immediate context in Isaiah 7); as Hezekiah in the expanding context of Isa-

iah's announcement that a child will be king (Isaiah 9:1-4); and as Jesus in Matthew's analogical reading of Isaiah (Matthew 1:23).

J. I. Packer's essay "Theology and Bible Reading" is a very useful defense of the discipline of theology. The Cappadocian fathers carried on in a day when one could not stroll through the marketplace without being asked about the hypostatic union and the economic Trinity. Aquinas lived in a day when theology was held to be the Queen of the sciences. But you and I are preaching and thinking and praying and believing in a day when theology is roundly rejected as a specialist enterprise or worse yet, a spiritual life mistake. Leave it to our premier evangelical statesman to save the Queen and restore her beauty and dignity. In this essay, Packer does at least three things for the reader. First, he overcomes the obstacles to doing theology in the modern-day church. Second, he explores the inner-connectedness of the ten disciplines that comprise theology (exegesis, biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, apologetics, ethics, missiology, spirituality, liturgy, and practical theology). And thirdly, he commends theology to us for its help in reading the Bible aright. Packer writes, "Living in a human-centered culture with our fallen hearts and heads constantly lapsing into a religiously (or irreligiously) vicious self-absorption, we need the admonitions of theology to keep us facing up to the God-centeredness of the Bible we read" (84).

Craig Gay's "The Sociology of Knowledge and the Art of Suspicion" and Loren Wilkinson's "Hermeneutics and the Postmodern Reaction Against Truth" together offer us an interpretation of interpretation. Their respective essays interact thoughtfully with the various mutations of post-modernism in the modern world. Gay explores the impact various liberation theologies (Marxism; feminism) have had on biblical interpretation and the inadequacies of such

methods. Wilkinson gives a solid overview of the theoretical developments that stretch from Descartes to Derrida. These essays are not theory for theory's sake. They are immensely practical. As much as we would like to think that post-modernism (or deconstructionism or post-structuralism) is simply an academic illness confined to university classrooms, the academic sneeze has become the common cold. As we attempt to assess our own time, we are helped to learn the criticisms that should be levied against the Enlightenment project and the warnings that should be sounded against the postmodern sabotage of knowledge and meaning.

Finally, James Houston gives us a fitting conclusion to this book of essays. In his article, "Toward a Biblical Spirituality," Houston interprets the interpreter. He reminds us that what we are after is a personal knowledge of the one who has spoken to us in a Book. The goal of reading the Bible is godliness, to be transformed by God in the interior of our lives. What we are after is a prayerful, meditative posture before the God who speaks. This is not pietistic pleading that dismisses the place of biblical scholarship. It is simply to ask ourselves, what is the goal of our reading? And what are the intellectual virtues necessary for reading the Bible well? Houston writes, "The 'act of Bible reading,' then, is far more than learning techniques and becoming knowledgeable in exegesis and hermeneutics. It opens us to being inspired intelligently and affectively in the way of truth" (173).

Our culture is aflame with a hermeneutical crisis. The Church has inhaled this strange fire-like second-hand smoke. And we as church leaders need help in finding the door to meaning, truth, God, and godliness. *The Act of Bible Reading* is a step in the right direction.

TRAVIS TAMERUS  
Columbia, Missouri

### *DOES GOD BELIEVE IN ATHEISTS?*

John Blanchard

Evangelical Press, Darlington, England

655 pages, cloth, \$24.95

The opinion generally prevails in our postmodern age that evangelical Christianity is a marginalized, largely discredited movement swirling around in the backwaters of contemporary culture. First the enlightenment with its dependence on rational thought delivered a blow which sent traditional belief in God and the Bible reeling. Then came Kant with his wall between the phenomenal world of space, time, and appearances, and the metaphysical world where God and all philosophical essences reside. This barrier, so it is believed, rules out any formal proofs of God's existence. Then came existentialism, which shoved all confidence and assurance in spiritual matters into the black hole of inwardness and subjectivity, leaving modern man in a complete confusion. A knockout punch, if indeed any was really needed, was brought by Darwin with his evolutionary explanation of the universe and man.

Admittedly, the grand faith tradition which undergirded the moral and intellectual presuppositions of the Western World has seemingly been on the defensive in the last 150 years. With the true Church of Jesus Christ allegedly routed in the philosophical arena, a multitude of new ideologies (some poorly disguised versions of ancient heresies) marched onto the stage. Christian Science, with its mindless denial of reality; Mormonism, with its deification of man; Russellism, which boldly proclaims a created Jesus; and countless other systems drained their poison into the already hopelessly toxic waters of modern religion. Islam, marching on iron legs, is shoving its way through Europe and is one of the fastest growing sects even in the United States.

Can one book, using the Word of God as a guide, and empowered by an unshaken confidence in the orthodox theology of the Reformers, Puritans and great evangelical leaders of the past, usher us through the maze of philosophical nonsense, cultural ignorance and cultic aberrations, and show how that the old straight and narrow way is, after all, the true one? Can one book show that the "faith once for all delivered to the saints" rests on solid historical and intellectual ground and offers the only valid basis for life? Perhaps not. But this book by John Blanchard comes as close to doing this as any similar work I know.

Blanchard aims his guns at all the systems which deny the reality of a personal, holy, sovereign God revealed in the Scripture. He challenges them on their own ground and is as courageous and confident as David who went out against the defiant Philistine giant who railed against God's army in the Valley of Elah. He amasses a host of logical arguments, draws extensively from historical evidences, and cites an incredible number of authorities, including many modern scientists, who believe in the reality of the God of the Bible, the credibility of the Gospel, and the power of faith. His discussion of the proofs of the resurrection on pages 578-584 alone is worth the price of the book. We have a champion in John Blanchard, and his book *Does God Believe in Atheists?* is his sword to slay the enemies of truth. Following are some characteristics of this book.

**Faithfulness.** Frequently when we read modern apologetics for the Christian faith we get the strong feeling that the defender himself has been affected by skeptical thought. A little ground is yielded here, and a little there, so that when the final line is drawn much territory has been given up to the enemy. No so with Blanchard. There is no compromise here on any of the great doctrines of the Christian faith: predestination, creation, inspiration, atonement, judgment, heaven, and hell. All the resources

of history, logic, and common sense are used, but in the end Blanchard relies on the truth of Holy Scripture which is relied on to be its own witness.

**Clarity.** Spurgeon once said that philosophy is ignorance concealed under hard names. This quip is true, but unfortunately behind these hard names are ideas that affect us every day in politics, sociology, science and even religion. The problem is that many studies on such philosophies as empiricism, logical positivism, and existentialism are presented in such technical jargon that the average reader has difficulty understanding, much less answering, such errors. Many times I have put aside a book by an evangelical simply because a person of average intelligence like myself cannot decode the language. Blanchard has a rare gift of taking complicated concepts and making them clear and applicable to our own lives.

**Breadth.** The scope of Blanchard's studies on the many alien ideologies that challenge the Christian faith is considerable. Almost every page brims with citations from scholars in the various fields under review, usually short and to the point. He seems to know the arguments of the atheists, agnostics, pseudo-scientists, false religionists and cultists like the back of his hand. Look at the index of "names." It takes up almost ten pages of fine print. He obviously has listened to and studied most of the contemporary public enemies of the Bible, some of whom are regularly on TV, and he is able to shred their arguments. It's fun to read this.

**Relevance.** Someone has described the squabbles among believers today as somewhat like a group of sailors who are arguing over what color to paint the deck while the ship is sinking. To be sure there will always be ongoing discussions and disagreements among Christians on various issues that relate to baptism, the second coming, and many other things. But when the enemy is at the door and the very survival of the Church is threatened, it behooves all

people of faith to stand together. The great issue of our day is whether, after all, humanity is bound by any transcendent standard of truth or righteousness. Blanchard shows that only traditional theism can provide such a foundation today. I call this relevance.

**Practicality.** This is not merely a book for the academic or theological pedant. As a pastor I find this book packed with a lot of practical information like statistics, quotations, and sermon illustrations. Any Christian will be encouraged by the bold and powerful arguments for faith. Any serious believer can only find his faith strengthened as Blanchard deals with some of the common doubts all of us have had at times. This book is a powerful resource for defending the faith against such contemporary errors as Darwinism, subjectivism, and New Age. It is an effective training manual for Christian leaders who feel threatened and intimidated by the anti-Christian culture that surrounds them.

Without the power of the Holy Spirit, of course, the human heart cannot be changed, no matter how effective the communicator of the Gospel. Still it is important that the modern pastor or Christian worker have the best information available. He needs a well-trained mind, keen discernment, and should have in his arsenal the best weapons available for the warfare in which we are now engaged as we enter a new century. Here is one which, in my opinion, we cannot be without.

*DR. JOHN F. THORNBURY*  
Winfield, Pennsylvania