

# Book Reviews

*The Potter's Freedom: A Defense of the Reformation and a Rebuttal of Norman Geisler's Chosen But Free.* By James R. White. Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 2000, 343 pp., \$17.99.

Several features give unusual importance to *The Potter's Freedom* for contemporary evangelicalism in general and Southern Baptists in particular. First, the debate involves two effective and passionate Christian apologists who affirm inerrancy without equivocation. Both also have trained themselves to detect error destructive of Christian truth and have active ministries of positive instruction in the faith and debate against error. Second, it has immediate implications for the current turmoil in evangelicalism over Open Theism. Third, these doctrines under discussion reflect the give-and-take of the Southern Baptist theological renewal. Fourth, White presents an argument that corresponds perfectly with the theological concerns of Southern Baptists in the early generations of denominational life.

Geisler's book prompted the strong response by White in its claim to represent "moderate Calvinism" as opposed to "extreme Calvinism." Just as one man's trash is another man's treasure so is one man's "moderate Calvinism" another man's Arminianism. Along the way of defending his moderate version of Calvinism, Geisler seeks to repudiate every distinctive doctrine of Calvinism and replace it with his own stylized theology. James White could not let this redefinition go unchallenged. Not only, according to White, does Geisler give misleading signals with his nomenclature, he badly

misrepresents Calvinistic arguments and argues his own case poorly, employing a number of exegetical and logical fallacies.

In this review, I will summarize the polemical strategy of White, evaluate his arguments and interaction with Geisler, and relate the issue to contemporary Southern Baptist life.

Norman Geisler's *Chosen But Free* [CBF] warned his readers against a system of thought that he considered a "hideous error, ... shocking, ...hav[ing] a devastating effect on one's own salvation, ...theologically inconsistent, philosophically insufficient, and morally repugnant." It makes its adherents go through "exegetical contortions." Geisler names the system that he describes as "extreme Calvinism." He intends to defend a kinder gentler version of Protestant doctrine that he prefers to call "moderate Calvinism." [White, 17-19]

James White cannot conscientiously allow Geisler to go unchallenged on these unkind and ungentle charges, particularly in light of the mangled portrait of historic Reformed theology set forth by Dr. Geisler. An artist would go far in his credibility to compare his talents with "The Night Watch" by Rembrandt rather than "Saturday Night Bath" by a third grader. White considers Geisler's presentation so flawed at the point of accurate description that it makes his own presentation virtually useless in advancing serious discussion on these important issues. Rather "CBF will be a source of great confusion, not enlightenment, on the subject of the sovereignty of God and the will of man" [19, 20]. White knows Dr. Geisler personally, considers him a worthy apolo-

gist of mere Christianity, and respects his style of direct confrontation. His rejoinder takes the course of an “honest, direct refutation and interaction,” consistent with the spirit and style of Geisler himself.

In his introduction, White gives a clear presentation of five particular issues that he finds disturbingly misleading in Geisler’s diatribe against Calvinism. White repeatedly engages Geisler along the line of these five issues: redefinition of the terms of the debate, poor presentation, the nomenclature of “knowingly pre-determining,” inexplicable omissions of Reformed argument and exegesis (“silence speaks volumes” as White puts it), and poor exegesis. We will visit each of these issues briefly later in this review.

In chapter one, “The Vital Issue,” White summarizes briefly the Reformed doctrine of God’s sovereignty and the five-lettered flower of Reformed soteriology. In chapter two, White leads the reader through a critical examination of Geisler’s construct of “Determinately Knowing.” Chapter three contains White’s exposition of human inability and chapter four follows with White’s examination of *CBF* on human will. Chapters five through nine all treat unconditional election within different contexts of the argument. Chapter five defines the Reformed view of unconditional election through a series of pertinent and contextually full quotes from leading Reformed thinkers, including James P. Boyce. White’s intent is to show that Geisler’s view can lay no claim to fit within historic Calvinism. Chapter six engages in vigorous exegetical interaction with three pivotal verses that appear frequently in *CBF*, ostensibly in demonstration that “God *wants* to save all men, but is unable to do so outside of their freely willing it to be so” (135). These verse

are Matthew 23:37, 1 Timothy 2:4, and 2 Peter 3:9. Chapter seven unfolds several key passages in which Jesus himself proves to be an “extreme Calvinist,” such as John 6:37-40, John 6:41-45 along with the ways in which *CBF* treats the passages. Chapters eight and nine consist of White’s response to Geisler’s exegetical evidence for election conditioned on human response with chapter nine being given totally to Romans 9. Chapter eight has an extensive exposition of Ephesians 1:3-11 closing with the remark, “If it is Dr. Geisler’s intention to lead people to ‘avoid extreme Calvinism,’ that is, avoid the Reformed faith, then he must do more than offer eight short sentences in response to such passages as this” (181). Chapters ten, “The Perfect Work of Calvary,” and eleven concern particular atonement, the former containing White’s exposition and the latter White’s critique of Geisler’s assertions of general atonement. This chapter also includes discussion of the vexed historical question concerning Calvin’s position on atonement for the elect. Chapters twelve and thirteen follow the same pattern for irresistible grace, first White’s exposition and then His critique of *CBF*. White’s opening sentence to chapter thirteen gives due preparation for the shocking portrayals *CBF* gives of this doctrine. “It is our honest opinion that *CBF* shows the greatest dislike and uses the strongest language in denying the Reformed doctrine of irresistible grace than in any other area of its presentation. The idea that God would sovereignly change a sinner from a God-hater to a God-lover by the exercise of divine power seems especially reprehensible to Dr. Geisler” (299). In chapter fourteen, White argues that Geisler’s inferences about the practical results of

Calvinism are false. Geisler's accusations truly are remarkable, but sadly typical, of a narrow, unsympathetic, unknowledgeable, reactionary mind-set. White's responses, therefore, show pluck in his pointed, plain, and unembarrassed engagement of the issues, while he sincerely shows perplexity that these implications show a style of argument "that is far below the kind of material we would expect to come from Dr. Geisler's pen" (333). Geisler, in accordance with his truthful conviction that "false doctrine leads to false deeds," loads the Calvinist with a heavy burden. Calvinism [extreme, that is] makes a person fail to take personal responsibility for his actions; Calvinism blames God for evil; Calvinism lays the groundwork for universalism; Calvinism is the occasion for atheism; Calvinism undermines evangelism, an accusation that has achieved most-favored objection status; Calvinism undercuts motivation for intercessory prayer (330-335).

As mentioned above, one issue addressed intensely by White is Geisler's foundational understanding of the Divine sovereignty/human responsibility interaction. Geisler asserts "Whatever he forechooses cannot be *based on* what he foreknows. Nor can what he foreknows be based on what he *forechose*. Both must be simultaneous and coordinate acts of God. Thus God knowingly determined and determinately knew from all eternity everything that would come to pass including all free acts" (58). White considers it "vital to understand this concept in Geisler's theology, for it is the key to unlocking the problem of his use of terminology" (53). Geisler seeks to avoid the question of the logical relationship between knowledge and decree opting rather for the assertion of their simple

eternal simultaneity. In the end, however, one must take a position as to whether the knowledge of historic (temporal) decision and action gives rise to the decree or whether the decree gives rise to the historic decision and action. God does in fact know both his decree and the actual historical events intuitively and holds them as elements of his perfect knowledge, but that truth in itself does not eliminate there being a logical relationship between them. White demonstrates that Geisler clearly takes the Arminian side of this question. God's determination in Geisler's system amounts only to an eternally present knowledge, since all of the historic (temporal) future is before him immediately. The free actions of men give content to both His knowledge and thus his decree. The only free and sovereign action God prosecutes is the creation of the particular world in which these things happen. God determines the events of the world only passively. His discussion indicates his antipathy toward both unconditional election and irresistible grace by characterizing the historically Reformed view as a "double whammy" by which God forces people "into His kingdom against their will" (68). White points out that this view could not be called "moderately Calvinistic, weakly Calvinistic, or even remotely Calvinistic" (71).

This leads to another problem with *CBF* to which White returns repeatedly. *CBF* consistently redefines the terms of the debate. Since Geisler rejects out of hand Calvin's doctrine of decrees, his view of unconditional election, his doctrine of depravity and the bondage of the fallen human will, his argument for the necessity of irresistible grace, and the very foundation for his doctrine of perseverance, White, understandably, finds Geisler's

attempts at defining himself as a “moderate Calvinist” confusing. White argues that Geisler even misunderstands Calvin on the atonement. Those who maintain Calvin’s views and argue carefully their position from within the stream of historic Reformed orthodoxy, Geisler stigmatizes as “extreme Calvinist.” It is a well-put question when White asks, “Why should Dr. Geisler wish to be called any kind of Calvinist at all?” This question emerges frequently in the discussion as White demonstrates Geisler’s consistent pattern of taking the Arminian side of every distinctive issue. White shows that Geisler’s definition of unconditional election shares nothing in common with historic Calvinism but indeed is “fully Arminian” and “pure Arminianism” (173, 175). On the atonement, White concludes “there is no meaningful difference between Geisler’s ‘moderate Calvinism’ and Arminianism. When we find them saying the same things all the time, why bother differentiating them?” (279) In his conclusion, White returns to the oft sung chorus, that CBF “presents Arminianism under the guise of ‘moderate Calvinism’” and that “the attempt to turn Arminianism into Calvinism involves using words in a manner that is utterly self-contradictory” (336). The reader has to bear in mind that White does not consider the simple discernment that Geisler’s view is Arminian amounts to a refutation of the position. Again, when he observes such, he only demonstrates that Geisler confuses the issue by redefining the terms of the debate.

In addition to the confusion created by his pattern of redefinition, White believes that Geisler gives “poor representation” of the Reformed position. He “takes no pains to accurately or adequately represent [*sic*] the Reformed position that it so

strongly denounces” (21). White demonstrates throughout that Geisler fails seriously to engage Reformed exegesis of major biblical texts. On Geisler’s treatment of John Owen’s extensive investigation of the uses of the word “all” in Scripture, White remarks, “If CBF were to attempt to offer *some* kind of meaningful response to the extensive argumentation found in Owen’s work at this point (the single chapter to which Geisler refers in Owen’s book comprises thirteen pages of small type containing numerous references to the original languages) we might have some basis upon which to accept these assertions. But we are left with none” (144). He also shows that when Geisler quotes Calvinist literature, he often ignores the larger context so that his use of the material creates an impression other than its original intent (259-262). On the question of Calvin’s view of the atonement White observes, “There is not the *first attempt* to interact with a *single* Reformed work on the subject” (254). After citing evidence for this, White laments, “We honestly cannot understand how one can make such a statement without dealing in depth with the readily available works that argue for just the opposite conclusion” (255).

White also weaves through his response his disappointment that Geisler simply remains silent on several key passages that should constitute a large portion of the discussion and offers no response to tomes of Reformed exegesis. Geisler includes one paragraph on John 6:37. Concerning Ephesians 1 White notes, “CBF offers almost *nothing* in response to this tremendous passage. The section is referred to eleven times in the work, but in none of these is any meaningful exegesis offered of the text. A grand total of *eight*

*sentences* are [sic] offered in response to this grand passage" (171). White then discusses the atonement and does extensive exegesis of several passages in Hebrews. He points out that, not only does *CBF* not discuss the biblical doctrine of the atonement or interact with the Reformed doctrine on the issue, "there is no discussion of the passages we examined in the previous chapter regarding the work of Christ in the book of Hebrews" (251). At the close of chapter 10, "The Perfect Work of Calvary," White returns to this theme: "Many of these passages are not even mentioned in *CBF*" (248). He then quotes Geisler's assertion that "there are no verses that, properly understood, support limited atonement." White believes he has just demonstrated that that is untrue, and since Geisler failed to treat the most pertinent passages he has no foundation for his assertion that "extreme Calvinists have not offered any satisfactory interpretations of those texts [that teach unlimited atonement]" (248). Commenting on his own close attention to Hebrews 2:17 and its context and the comments of Reformed writers about it, White inserts in a footnote "*CBF* likewise provides exactly two sentences of commentary on page 203, 'Christ died for everyone, not just the elect. This is the plain meaning of the text.' No discussion of context, no discussion of the meaning of propitiation" (250, footnote 12). In a chapter on Romans 9 White uncovers an egregious omission of meaningful engagement.

While Dr. Geisler will make reference to John Piper's work, and hence *must* know of the extensive discussion that work contains refuting this very concept, *not a single word is uttered in refutation....* There is no discussion of the *pages* of argumentation provided by Piper *against*

the position of *CBF*....It seems to us that given the claim on page 83 of *CBF* that Piper is "mistaken" in his views..., it would be necessary for *CBF* to at least make [sic] an *attempt* to rebut *some* of Piper's material. (217)

White's critique of Geisler on this issue of "silence" appears virtually in every chapter.

Perhaps more consistent, and insistent, than any other critique is White's recurring theme that Geisler does poor exegesis. "Exegesis is not the forte of *CBF*. Very few passages are addressed in a truly exegetical fashion, and in most cases mere assertion takes the place of meaningful consideration of the important elements of the task of biblical interpretation. Unfortunately, *CBF* provides far more examples of *eisegesis* than it does of *exegetis*" (28). *The Potter's Freedom* challenges Geisler over and over on this issue: "*CBF* has absolutely no basis for its assertion that it is the 'plain meaning' of the text" (139); "We are given no citations, quotations, or references to substantiate the assertion" (145); "Saying, 'Well God could have said "some" if that is what he meant' is a tremendously weak argument normally reserved for use when no exegetical argument can be presented" (149); "Hence we see that *CBF* fails to substantiate its charge of error against the Reformed interpretation, and instead ends up making the text say the opposite of its actual intention" (186); "The exegesis offered by *CBF* on this topic is often tremendously strained, or based upon objections that are shallow at best" (251); "We here have a classic example of what Dr. Geisler accuses the Reformed of: *eisegesis*, reading into the passage a meaning that it could never have borne when first written" (277). Perhaps most damaging to the

case of *CBF* is White's isolation of the big three Scripture passages upon which much of Geisler's argument is based [mentioned above] and White's closely reasoned exegesis of them. "If, in fact," White writes, "one can present an interpretation of *each* that is *at least* as valid, if not much more so, that his own, does it not follow that the vast majority of the biblical response provided in *CBF* becomes suspect?" (150). In his final summary White reiterates, "On an exegetical basis *CBF* does not pass the most cursory examination, let alone an in-depth critique. The reader has seen examples of eisegesis in every single chapter of *CBF*" (336).

Now we must ask, "Does White execute his intended task convincingly?" I would answer positively, not only for its content but the manner in which the discourse proceeds. This book serves as a model for open and respectful polemical engagement. Several reasons support this evaluation. First, White isolates early in the text the particular points upon which he will criticize Geisler. He follows through on these criticisms in each major category of investigation and gives an abundance of evidence for his focus on those particular issues. He restates each objection throughout the book in many contexts so that the reader has a clear perception of the specific ways in which he takes exception to Geisler's presentation.

Second, White provides an abundance of material from the position that Geisler criticizes so that the reader will grasp the substantive nature of his objections. Before he accuses Geisler of eisegesis, he does an exposition of the text in question providing sources from which other expositors may be examined. If he accuses Geisler of misrepresentation, he provides

a more fully contextual quote along with allusions to other literature to inform the reader. If he detects mere assertion with no argument provided in support, he explains the point being contested. If he says Geisler has ignored the bulk of compelling Reformed scholarship on an issue, he provides references to several works that should be consulted. He has not merely fought assertion with counter-assertion [is not, is too, is not, is too], or registered unverified complaints but has given a much meatier body of material for discussion for disputants.

Third, White has given a personal exposition of the controverted points. Before engaging Geisler's views of unconditional election, he gives biblical and historical exposition of the doctrine. Before isolating his criticisms of Geisler's apparent hostility to irresistible grace, White opens the pertinent biblical material for the discussion and affirms what he thinks are the beautifully encouraging aspects of the doctrine. He gives a brief lesson in hermeneutics so that the issues of interpretation he engages will not be set in a vacuum. By his doing this throughout the book, the reader knows more about what is at stake in the discussion.

Fourth, White's discussion of the pastoral, personal, and evangelistic implications of forming right views of these subjects was helpful. Of course, Dr. Geisler is just as concerned about those issues and, in fact, seems to be driven by what he thinks are the destructive tendencies of the doctrines in question. That made White's response at that level all the more important.

Stylistically, a few irritations are sprinkled through the book. Grammatical irregularities such as failure of subject verb relationship and many split infinitives

tives appear. Some of these are “*sic-ed*” above. Also the overuse of italics is a throwback to the seventeenth century. Surely the reader can read a well-written sentence and understand the emphasis it is supposed to have without the *italicized* hints of the writer.

The pertinence of this book for contemporary Southern Baptist life is quite profound. First, the disagreement between White and Geisler precisely parallels a theological issue in the Convention. Second, the objections raised by Geisler along with his characterizations of the practical effect of Calvinism reflects precisely what several leaders have said in recent years. Third, the answer given by White could seemingly arise directly from the writings of the first generation of Southern Baptists. They often engaged these objections and answered with the vigor and confidence. Fourth, White’s attention to the practical issues, as mentioned above, address concerns in the minds of many brethren. Instead of diminishing one’s sense of responsibility for his actions, the doctrines of grace produced churches that were disciplined corporately and produced members that were keen on perseverance in holiness. Far from blaming God for evil, the doctrines of grace give hope for the certain and purposeful disposal of the evil one and all God’s enemies. These doctrines unfold in clear terms the infinite hatred that God has for sin and the absolute justice with which he exposes it through a certain and definite atonement and the effectuality with which he will remove corruption from His people (Titus 2:11-13; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24). Instead of creating atheists, the doctrines of grace reveal the true hatred in the heart of sinners against a holy and sovereign God who justly claims and manifest his abso-

lute prerogatives over his creatures, and at the same time subdues rebels to His will so that they confess that He alone is God and to His name alone should glory be given. Instead of undermining motives for evangelism, the doctrines of grace give courage, purpose, and hope for success in the most unlikely situations. The doctrines have kept James White active in his vigorous evangelism of Mormons when many others have quit because they consider the prospects of conversion too unlikely. Those who believe the doctrines of grace avoid tactics that focus on manipulative practices and diminish the doctrine of sin, the necessity of repentance, the substitutionary and propitiatory nature of the cross, our utter unworthiness and thus indebtedness to grace alone, and the necessity of imputed righteousness for right standing before a holy and righteous God.

Every minister of the Gospel should engage the subject matter of this book and master the arguments. It is more than internecine evangelical debate of interest to academics only; it concerns some of the most fundamental issues of preaching and evangelism.

Thomas J. Nettles

*Shall Not the Judge of All Earth Do What Is Right? Studies on the Nature of God in Tribute to James L. Crenshaw.* David Penchansky and Paul L. Redditt, editors. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000, xxxv + 268 pp., \$32.50.

This collection of essays is dedicated to James L. Crenshaw, Robert L. Flowers Professor of Old Testament at Duke University. A graduate of The Southern Baptist theological Seminary, Crenshaw has dis-

tinguished himself as one of the most respected Baptist Old Testament scholars of our time. It is fitting that a volume of essays by his contemporaries and peers should be published in his honor. Crenshaw's scholarly significance is evident not only in the prefatory tribute paid to him by David Penchansky, one of the editors, but also in the bibliography of his publications compiled by David A. Mills. This bibliography lists fifteen books Crenshaw has authored, five he has edited, two monograph series he has edited, and 125 articles he has written since 1967.

The title of this volume, borrowed from Abraham's question in Genesis 18:25, sets the agenda for the book. Although in its literary context the rhetorical question, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is right?" anticipates a positive answer, "Indeed, he does!" most of the essays answer the question negatively. The judge of all the earth does not always do right. Finding inspiration in Crenshaw's own work, *A Whirlpool of Torment*, the essayists explore the dark side of God, trying to wrestle seriously with Old Testament texts that portray him as violent, oppressive, and abusive. Typical is Marti J. Steussy's contribution, the longest in the book, "The Problematic God of Samuel" (pp.127-61). After examining how the narrator portrays God's inner life, his actions, his speech, and the way other characters speak about him, Steussy arrives at conclusions that she admits are disturbing: God's inner life is characterized more by anger than love, his actions are primarily destructive, and his speech is largely condemnatory.

Many of the essays come to similar conclusions. Limitations of space preclude a detailed critique of the volume, but it is

fair to say that this collection of articles reflects the current state of Old Testament studies. For some contributors, who are overtly deconstructionist, the primary question to pose before a text is not, "What did the author mean?" but, "Whose political interests are being served?" While the essayists' interpretations will not be acceptable to many readers of this Journal, as a *whole* they have performed a valuable service in exposing weaknesses and fallacies in traditional approaches. Many of the enigmas inherent in the biblical text are difficult to domesticate if they are approached with dogmatic theological categories. On the other hand, methodological fallacies are not lacking in the volume. Steussy's essay, for example, is impressive for its collection of the biblical data, but statistical evidence hardly tells the whole story. Each statement about or by God must be interpreted within its immediate literary context, and within the context of the entire Old Testament. One would hardly know from her treatment of God and the Israelites in the book of Samuel that the events are described against the backdrop of Yahweh's gracious covenant relationship with Israel, and that his wrath is expressed precisely for the reasons and in terms that he had predicted in the covenant curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

The indices to biblical references and biblical scholars cited at the back are very helpful. But the paucity of evangelical scholars in this list is telling. Either main stream scholarship is not listening to what evangelicals have to say, or evangelicals are not addressing the issues. Unfortunately both statements are true. The approaches represented in this book must be taken seriously. The volume poses a

challenge to persons with a more positive disposition toward the Old Testament to deal more honestly and at the same time more respectfully with the biblical texts.

Daniel I. Block

*The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism.* By Phillip E. Johnson. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000, 192 pp., \$17.99.

This book is another in a series of short works by Johnson exploring weaknesses in evolutionary theory and defending a new version of creationism called “Intelligent Design” (ID). In distinction from the older creationism, this version does not depend on the Bible and is open to the possibility that the universe is billions of years old. ID appeals solely to evidence in the creation and uses “the scientific community’s own standards of skepticism and objectivity” (p. 150) to challenge the hegemony of evolutionary explanations of the forms of life on earth.

Johnson has written this book to discuss recent work of supporters of Intelligent Design theory and their critics. Evolutionists have (predictably) begun to respond unfavorably to ID theory, and Johnson provides a popular, humorous, and engaging counter-response, dealing with such events as the spectacle surrounding the Kansas board of education’s standards developed in 1999 regarding how evolution should be presented in the schools (subsequently thrown out) and shows how this was treated prejudicially in the media, and briefly reviewing a few books which attempt to refute ID (in a chapter called “The Empire Strikes Back”).

Johnson entitled the book, “The Wedge of Truth” seeing his work (and that of

other ID authors like Michael Behe and William Dembski) as driving a thin wedge into the cracks of the dogmatic timbers of evolutionism that are ignored by its adherents (including many Christian academics). For example, while ID theorists do not dispute the power of natural selection to modify various features of life-forms (like bird beaks), they question the lack of *any evidence* of a mechanism that makes possible the macrochanges necessary to create such things as lungs to breath air, wings to fly, and large cerebral cortices to speak and do calculus. Johnson points out that such complex change requires the addition of much new genetic information simultaneously (many genes are involved in such features), a phenomenon that seems inexplicable by the genetic mutation causal mechanism typically appealed to.

Johnson also decries the religious devotion of most scientists to what he has termed “methodological naturalism,” the belief that true science must assume no supernatural causality. Where, Johnson rightly asks, does this assumption come from? How could anyone possibly be sure that God has not/does not intervene in the natural order?

Though overall the book is a delightful read, a few weaknesses should be noted. To begin with, the popular level of this book, while helpful for publicizing ID, plays into the hands of naturalists who criticize ID as unscientific. Johnson’s contribution would be greater were he also to work on evolutionary theory at a more sophisticated and detailed level. Also, one wonders if Johnson has still conceded too much to natural scientists by relying on falsifiability as a criterion of true science. Though useful in the natural sciences, there are many beliefs humans hold that

are unfalsifiable (e.g. the existence of other minds, the validity of perceptual experience, and the existence of God). Yet this does not render them invalid or unrelated to science. In our desire to challenge naturalism regarding origins, we must be careful not to saw off the limbs on which we all sit. Furthermore, while Johnson is rightly concerned about the kind of simplistic, dogmatic biblicism that inhibited the acceptance of a heliocentric universe, there is no scientific reason to exclude *a priori* the use of the Bible in science. The Bible provides a necessary source of information regarding fundamental aspects of the natural order, humanity, religion, and God which must be incorporated into our sciences (as appropriate), if they are to accurately reflect God's understanding of reality (the proper goal of science, rightly understood). For example, how can we understand human nature in psychology without the biblical doctrines of sin or the image of God? Though there are legitimate apologetic reasons for avoiding this controversy when writing to a secular audience, one might tragically conclude from ID theory that the Bible has *no* place in science at all.

But these are largely quibbles. Johnson's example of fearless, independent Christian thought in the face of the overwhelming dominance of evolutionary theory in our day is of inestimable value to the Church.

Eric L. Johnson

*Great Women of the Bible in Art and Literature.* By Dorothée Sölle, Joe H. Kirchner, Herbert Haag, and Anne-Marie Schnieper-Müller. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994, 295 pp., \$25.00.

This large, beautifully printed and thoroughly researched book is a must for all libraries. Its low cost belies the hundreds of full-color reproductions of great art, including prints, photographs of sculptures, panels, frescoes, miniatures, and modern graphics. From earliest museum pieces through great paintings by Rubens, Chagall, Rosetti, Cranach, Michelangelo, and a multitude of other painters, each illustration, printed on heavy, glossy paper, is accompanied by clarifying, detailed discussions that expound on the artistic vision of each artist represented within a theological or historical framework.

This impressive volume follows the wealth of occidental art that inspired writers to interpret the women of the Bible in various forms of literature throughout the centuries. From Eve to Mary, women are depicted in texts not only from the Bible, but also from the Apocrypha, Coptic writings, the Talmud and Koran, legends and extrabiblical references from literary works by such authors as Goethe, Dante, and Thomas Mann.

Dorothée Sölle, Professor, Union Theological Seminary, New York City, sets the tone for each chapter with a critical commentary that interprets in contemporary terms the biblical texts that tell a woman's story. The general thesis of the book is both a treasury of religious art and its relevant literature, and a confirmation that the problems facing women today are the same as those confronted by women in biblical times.

Chapters are devoted to: Eve and Lilith; Sarah and Hagar; Lot's Wife; Rebekah; Rachel and Leah; Tamar; Potiphar's Wife; Rahab; Deborah; Jephthah's Daughter; Delilah; Ruth; Hannah; Abigail; The Witch of Endor; Bathsheba; The Queen of Sheba;

Judith; Esther; Susanna; Elizabeth; Herodias and Salome; The Woman of the Ointment; Mary and Martha; Mary Magdalene; Mary.

Mozelle Clark Sherman

*Healing Our Anger: Seven Ways to Make Peace in a Hostile World.* By Michael Obsatz. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2000, 70 pp., \$12.99 paper.

Michael Obsatz is a professor of sociology at Macalester College in Minnesota. He specializes in marriage and family counseling and has written other books, including one that addresses how to raise non-violent children in a violent world. This book is also of the “how to” variety and is quite clearly of the self-help variety. It provides simple suggestions for those seeking simple answers to a very complex issue.

I sense that the title of the book may be misleading. It suggests that there may be things we can do to change society and thus create a less hostile world. Instead this book is just another one of many books that address anger management issues. The text is of the garden-variety and offers few ideas that are new. In essence this book proposes what is really a convoluted solution to a problem that strikes at the heart of our very nation. We do not need overly simplified solutions.

I do concur that any solution must begin on a personal level, but perhaps there is also a need to make changes in our homes and in our educational system. Perhaps what is really needed is a paradigm shift in which we recognize the role of the Heavenly Father in life, in the home, and in the heart. We might be better off if we encouraged people to focus on the

wants, hurts and needs of others, rather than perpetually looking at the world from a “What do I get out of it?” perspective.

This book does not even begin to address the big issues; instead it offers ways for an individual to manage his or her own anger, hence promoting universal peace. The contents of this document support the adage that change occurs one person at a time. To create a peaceful world we must first make changes within ourselves.

*Healing our Anger* was something of a disappointment. Its references to faith and one’s personal spirituality as an inner source of peace were weak and rather generic in intent. It wanders off course by allowing for “some other power” (p.46) to which one can surrender in the search for personal peace. The Bible is described as one possible resource and never described as “the” resource. Prayer groups are described as merely another type of spiritual support (p.39). The author fails to acknowledge the powerful role prayer could play in making our hostile world a place of peace. Obsatz’s recipe for healing anger involves two cups of humanistic thought (self-love and self-forgiveness are two of many facets that he puts forth), a mild dash of generic spirituality, and a substantial amount of the rhetoric which is already in print. Blend until you get a book that is quickly on the market following a number of major tragedies of the violent variety.

Susan Schriver

*Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science and Theology.* By William A. Dembski. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999, 312 pp, \$19.99.

So you have never heard of Bill Dembski? Well, where have you been? Only time will tell for sure, but William A. Dembski may well have formulated the most important antivenom—next to the Gospel—the world has ever known. The Good News of Christ removes the sting of death; and it just may be that Dr. Dembski has the cure for the victims of Darwinian naturalism.

Even apart from this staggering possibility, Dembski cuts an impressive figure. Consider his education: Ph.Ds in mathematics (University of Chicago) and philosophy (University of Illinois at Chicago); earned degrees in theology and psychology; and postdoctoral work in mathematics at MIT, in computer science at Princeton, and in physics at the University of Chicago. He also may be the leading theorist in what is likely to be the most important intellectual movement of our generation, but more on this later.

Most significant about Dembski, however, is one of his ideas, one so brilliant in its simplicity that it is amazing no one thought of it before. The groundbreaking notion was published and defended with academic rigor in an earlier Cambridge University Press monograph (*The Design Inference*). The idea is simply this: humans regularly employ criteria to distinguish between (a) those things that result from chance or the necessity of natural law (e.g., signals from a pulsar, or death from a heart attack) and (b) those things that are the products of intelligence (e.g., signals from Martians, or death from strychnine poisoning). So why not isolate and apply these criteria to the natural order itself and see what results? Most people intuit that the world is replete with evidence of its intelligent design but cannot explain *how* they know. In *The Design Inference*

Dembski told us how.

Now, thanks to InterVarsity Press, Dembski's grand idea is presented to a broader readership in the wide-ranging *Intelligent Design*. And what does he mean by "Intelligent Design"? Perhaps we should first note what he does not mean. Intelligent Design does not seek to corroborate Genesis, though informed Christians will welcome its work as independent confirmation of biblical creation. Intelligent Design also does not seek to make claims on behalf of Christianity in general, though many of the movement's leaders are Christians. To the consternation of some atheists and Christians alike, the movement per se is not even religious, though atheists and Christians alike have much at stake here.

So just what is Intelligent Design? It is three things: a way to recognize divine action (encapsulated in Dembski's elegant idea); a scientific research program to study intelligent causes; and an intellectual movement poised to defeat Darwinism and its naturalistic stranglehold on Western culture. Intelligent Design, becoming widely known simply as ID (fast replacing the reference to your driver's license), is not based on religious commitments, but limits itself to inferences drawn from observation of the empirical world. The identity of the Intelligent Designer is left open in ID: its leaders are content to leave that debate to philosophers and theologians. Among prominent leaders in the movement, some may be better known than Dembski. Phillip Johnson (*Darwin on Trial*) spearheads and strategizes for the movement, and provides devastating criticisms of the Darwinian worldview. Michael Behe (*Darwin's Black Box*) brilliantly provides biochemical evidence of ID in the very

heart of the Darwinian stronghold itself, the cellular world of biology. But the mantle of chief philosopher and theologian of ID seems to have fallen upon Dembski, and *Intelligent Design* is an excellent place to become acquainted with his thought.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one sets the stage for understanding ID by reviewing the historical backdrop that undermined the concept of design in nature and the enthronement of Darwinism. Dembski notes that the reading of biblical signs by the ancients provided a compelling logic for recognizing intelligent causes. But, Spinoza and Schleiermacher denuded modernity's theological landscape of all supernaturalism, and a 19<sup>th</sup> century positivist-like approach to the natural world sheared the scientific countryside of design. Dembski exposes the flawed arguments that undergirded these revolutions.

Part two is the most important of the book. Here Dembski spells out in popular format how ID can be recognized in the natural world. The key to discerning ID in nature is bundled in understanding complex specified information (CSI). To infer ID is to infer CSI, a concept already used (in pretheoretic form) in a number of special sciences (e.g., forensics, artificial intelligence, cryptography, archaeology, and the search for extraterrestrial intelligence). Random typing can produce statistically improbable long strings of letters, therefore constituting complex information. Random typing might also generate specified information (such as *c-a-t*) that is not complex. But random typing will never produce that which is both complex and specified. "The universe will experience heat death before random typing at a keyboard produces a

Shakespearean sonnet" (p.166). So for instance, credit card numbers exemplify complex specified information—but the same can also be said for the fine-tuning of the universe and the genome of an organism. "CSI makes the world go round" (p.160).

Yet, to infer CSI is to infer design, and the inference to design is an impossible pill to swallow for naturalistic science. Naturalism, then, must attribute CSI to chance and natural law. Dembski's grand idea, however, collides head-on with this assumption. His "explanatory filter" with its three decision nodes rules out chance and natural law as sufficient to generate CSI. At the first node the question is asked, "Is this object/event contingent?" Contingency ensures that no choiceless automatic process, such as natural laws, has determined the result. But since chance can produce contingency, the second question must also be asked: "Is it complex?" Complexity ensures that the object/event is not so simple that chance might explain it. The third node is central in determining design: "Is it specified?" Specification requires information with a pattern that only intelligence can cause. So then, contingency, complexity, and specification must be ascertained to rule out necessity and chance, and to infer CSI or ID.

Part three demonstrates the coherent relationship of science and theology, and Dembski argues that ID establishes the bridge between the two. Science and theology need not be understood as necessarily in conflict or else unrelated. Dembski makes the case that they provide epistemic support for each other. Along the way, he tackles a number of relevant hot topics, such as the Big Bang, and divine and human agency. Happily

Dembski exposes the idea prevalent not only among naturalists, but also found in the thinking of some Christian philosophers such as Nancey Murphey, that human consciousness just supervenes as a phenomenon of lower order natural causes. As Dembski observes, this is a ploy to mask the inability of naturalists to account for intelligent causes such as human beings. A nice appendix rebuts common objections related to ID such as the “god-of-the-gaps” charge, methodological naturalism’s claim to sole legitimacy, and David Hume’s faulty analogy argument.

Southern Baptist readers will find of special interest that Dembski was hired to lead an ID think tank at Baylor University, the crown jewel of the schools related to the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Though the BGCT and Baylor leadership have long decried accusations that the university cultivated liberalism in the classroom, Dembski’s hiring has let the cat out of the bag. His appointment created a firestorm of controversy, with the faculty senate overwhelmingly passing a resolution to scrap the center. In specifically censuring ID, eight Baylor professors wrote Congress on behalf of “mainstream” science and Darwinism not to be taken in by this unscientific “creeping creationism.” Even after an external review committee vindicated the legitimacy of Dembski’s work, he still found himself on the chopping block. Why? After his vindication, he authored a widely circulated email that noted the “dogmatic opponents of design” had “met their Waterloo,” and that thanked the administration “for remaining strong in the face of intolerant assaults on freedom of thought and expression.” Dembski was now guilty of not being “collegial,” and was told to

recant his email. When he refused, he was removed as director of the think tank.

Perhaps Dembski was premature in pronouncing a Waterloo, but he was certainly right to recognize dogmatism and intolerance. Happily, work as significant as *Intelligent Design* will gain an ever wider circulation, and though not the Gospel, those bitten by naturalism will find in it a reliable cure.

Ted Cabal

*Keith Parks: Breaking Barriers & Opening Frontiers.* By Gary Baldrige. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1999, 102 pp., n. p., paper.

Gary Baldrige serves as the Associate Missions Coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. This fact is significant for two reasons. First, because he serves in this capacity, he was able to secure the cooperation of Keith and Helen Jean Parks in the writing of this brief biography. Second, this book is part biography and part advertisement for the CBF and its missions program.

When I picked up this book, I was intrigued because I served as a missionary under Keith Parks, when he was president of the Foreign Mission Board. I have great respect for Keith Parks and hoped to learn more about him. As I read the book, I became increasingly disappointed. Keith Parks is a major figure in the history of Southern Baptist missions in the twentieth century, but serious students will not find much information here. This book contains a little about Keith Parks and a lot about the missions program of the CBF. Certainly, the focus of the book is on the years Parks spent establishing the CBF’s mission board, a job he

performed admirably.

The author also fails to explain the conflict that developed between Parks and the trustees of the Foreign Mission Board. This is a subject that begs for examination. What one gets from Baldrige is an over-simplified distortion of a running battle that went on for years. As he tells it, the trustees were mean-spirited and unbaptistic, while Keith Parks was gentle, kind, wise, and always true to his deeply held Baptist beliefs. Anyone who knows Keith Parks would say that he is conservative in his theology. Why then did he clash with the trustees? What were the issues? Baldrige does not say. Parks kept the Foreign Mission Board out of the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention for several years. Why did he change his mind and enter the fray? Again, there is no explanation.

Another concern relates to Baldrige's treatment of Jerry Rankin. Rankin is consistently portrayed in a negative light. According to the author, Jerry Rankin dissolved Cooperative Services International and undid all Parks' initiatives to evangelize the unreached people groups of World A. It is true that Rankin dissolved CSI, but the real truth is that he made the whole International Mission Board like CSI. Most of the new Regional Leaders are former CSI personnel, and the emphasis on the unreached people groups is greater than before. There are significant differences between Parks and Rankin, but concern for World A is not one of them.

The author has a smooth writing style, and the book is easy to read. Apparently, it was designed to distribute to lay persons who support the CBF mission program. One can only hope that a PhD student will undertake a serious study of Keith Parks' influence on Southern

Baptist missions.

John Mark Terry

*Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience.* By William W. and Robert P. Menzies. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000, 233 pp., \$19.99.

A few years ago James D. G. Dunn wrote a book entitled *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology*. In that book he called on biblical interpreters to recognize the diversity that exists between the various NT writings. It might come as a surprise to some, then, that two scholars in the Classical Pentecostal tradition would write a book in which they criticize Dunn for construing too much unity among the NT writers. That is just what this volume does.

William Menzies is a patriarchal figure in the Assemblies of God, having been missionary, educator, statesman, and historian of the denomination. His son Robert is a NT scholar who obtained his doctorate at Aberdeen under I. H. Marshall, and now serves as an educator on the mission field. This book is an adaptation of his dissertation.

The authors contend that Paul and Luke do not have a unified doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism. Luke's theology of the Spirit is "charismatic," while Paul's is "soteriological." Specifically, "Luke's theology of the Spirit is indeed different from that of Paul. Luke not only fails to refer to soteriological aspects of the Spirit's work, his narrative presupposes a Pneumatology that does not include this dimension" (p. 52). Again, "Indeed, Luke's account betrays a Pneumatology decidedly different from Paul or John, neither of whom could conceive of baptized believers being without the Spirit"

(p. 53). Further, “Luke can speak of baptized believers being without the Spirit because his theology of the Spirit is not the same as that of Paul” (p. 55). And again, regarding Luke’s “pneumatological perspective,” “As we have noted, Paul would not—indeed, could not—have interpreted and narrated the event in this way” (p. 73). Finally, “The Spirit in Luke-Acts is never presented as a soteriological agent” (p. 88).

The book features a critique of the works of Dunn and Max Turner on Spirit baptism, since these two writers have mounted the most critical assault on the sort of view that the Menzies’ are defending, as well as a rebuke to Gordon Fee for abandoning the Pentecostal heritage on Spirit baptism in the wake of Dunn’s work. The gist of Robert Menzies’s argument against Dunn is that the British scholar has failed to recognize that Paul was “the first Christian to attribute soteriological functions to the Spirit,” and that this new element in Pneumatology did not override the older model, arising from Rabbinic interpretations of the prophets and employing a *peshet* hermeneutic of the John the Baptist sayings of the Gospels, that the Spirit is the eschatological charismatic gift *par excellence*, not the *sine qua non* of individual salvation. He rejects Turner’s case on different grounds. Turner has argued persuasively that Spirit-reception is a one-stage “charismatic” event which is connected to conversion-initiation, and that both Luke and Paul agree on this. (Turner’s material has been influential in both one-stage Charismatic circles and in Third Wave theology.) Again, this flies in the face of this book’s thesis, which argues rather that Luke sees the gift of the Spirit as a *donum superadditum*. The Menzies proceed to argue

for a classical Pentecostal two-stage doctrine of the reception of the Spirit (pp. 98-103).

Several major problems plague this book. First, the authors are convinced that they can read Luke’s implicit theology with as much certainty as they read Paul’s explicit theology. Narrative texts certainly contain theology and are written from a particular theological focus. The Menzies are correct that these theological insights must be factored in to the equation but they err in assuming that one can deduce such a construct with precision in areas where no didactic texts serve as guides. The book also takes a confusing turn in a chapter on tongues as initial evidence. The authors affirm that glossalalia is the initial evidence, but they propose that one cannot draw such a conclusion through the avenue of biblical theology but only via systematic theology, due to the nature of the inferential hermeneutic involved in such an examination. Laying aside for a moment the viability of this methodological strategy, the reader seems justified in asking the Menzies why they feel compelled to address initial evidence as a systematic issue, while they are so certain that Luke’s theology of Spirit baptism can be handled via biblical theology. Both theological constructs are inferred from the text, and in this reader’s opinion their interpretation of Luke’s view on initial evidence is just as tenuous as their interpretation of Luke’s model for Spirit baptism. In addition to offering unlikely solutions to these theological puzzles, they are guilty of hermeneutical double dealing.

Second, they are convinced that Luke upholds a theology of subsequence—that the Spirit is not soteriological but is given as a second blessing of salvation—but

they do not fully answer arguments from Dunn, Bruner, Gaffin, Fee, and others who contend that Luke is not propounding such a view. It is certainly significant that even Charismatic theologians have been moving increasingly toward the view that Spirit baptism is concurrent with regeneration. This book seems as much as anything to be a sort of last ditch effort to retain the traditional Pentecostal *ordo* of a two-stage experience of salvation. Specifically, the authors do not give sufficient treatment to the view that the successive outpourings of the Spirit in Acts are due to the progress of the gospel along the lines of Jesus' words in Acts 1:8, and that the successive manifestations are to show the Jewish believers that the Gentiles have received the same gift as they, without required adherence to Mosaic law. This thesis, advocated by Bruner, Dunn, and others, not only provides an adequate interpretive framework for the various texts in Acts, but it also demonstrates Luke's solidarity with Paul in dealing with the Gentile "problem."

This leads to the final observation. The Menzies are apparently content with a NT milieu in which competing theologies not only existed in the church, but found their way into the NT. They make it clear that Luke and Paul are at odds, and that they themselves are more inclined to follow Luke. But one would think that self-proclaimed Bible-believing interpreters would be distressed at such a claim. Or perhaps this book represents one among many recent gestures from Pentecostal scholarship that Pentecostals are not simply "Evangelicals who speak in tongues." The authors ask this very question: "How are we Pentecostals different from our Evangelical fellow believers who are open to the gifts?" (p. 47). This book is an

answer to that question, but the answer is certainly troubling since it requires its supporters to conclude that there is a radical dichotomy between the pneumatologies of Luke and Paul. Of all possible solutions to whatever interpretive challenges might be in the text on the subject at hand, this would seem to be the last possible route "Evangelicals" would want to travel.

Chad Brand