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Reformation
& Revival



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As a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization.

Harry Blamires

Perhaps the current mood (cultivated in some Christian groups) of anti-intellectualism begins now to be seen as the serious evil it is. It is not true piety at all but part of the fashion of the world and therefore a form of worldliness. To denigrate the mind is to undermine foundational Christian doctrines.

John R. W. Stott

...the danger is not that religion has become the content of television shows but that television shows may become the content of religion.

Neil Postman

Book Reviews

Mind Renewal in a Mindless Age

James Montgomery Boice

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House (1993).

136 pages, paper, \$8.99.

Without a doubt, our society is sinking fast into the waters of materialism, secularism, humanism and relativism. In many respects, she is already fully immersed. Perhaps what is more frightening is the inability of the church to identify, and thus, in turn, resist the same mind-set. James Boice, senior pastor of Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church, has edited a section of a recent sermon series from the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, addressing these prevalent issues. The subtitle of this popularly written book expresses his intent: *Preparing to Think and Act Biblically*.

While many people seem to have laid aside the exercise of "thinking" and have allowed the mass media, especially television, to do it all for them, Dr. Boice confidently takes the reader to God's Word, to Romans 12:1-2 in particular, and demonstrates how the Christian mind can remain *faithful* and *fruitful* in our "mindless" culture. In brief, this excellent book is about the "Christian mind" and the renewal of it in a nonthinking age.

David Wells, in his important recent book, *No Place for Truth*, insists that "there is no Christian faith in the absence of sound doctrine, sound instruction, or the pattern of sound teaching." Later he asserts that "belief and practice (are) inextricably related to each other" (p. 103). With that benchmark, Wells should be pleased if he read Boice's work. From the outset, as the context is established for the biblical text of Romans 12:1-2, Boice urges the reader to love and appreciate the fact that "doctrine is practical, and practical material must be doctrinal if it is to be helpful at all" (pp. 12-13). Indeed, as Boice digs into the truth of these

two verses, he accomplishes his stated desire that “everything God has done for us in salvation has bearing on everything we should think and do, that is on all of life. We must think differently, and we must also *be* different, because God has saved us from our sins” (p. 20). For those who fear that doctrine will kill the church, this book will demonstrate that it is necessary if we are to *think* properly, thus live as we must.

The first half of this book (chapters 1-5) are rich in the truth and application of verse one. In the second half (chapters 6-10), Boice skillfully addresses what he calls “the pattern of this age.” The reader is exhorted to “break out of the world’s categories of thinking and instead let our minds be molded by the Word of God” (p. 73). Because Christians have not done this very well, he takes the time to help the reader identify some of the categories, values, and behavioral patterns of the world. As I read this book, I found myself thinking of different people to whom I would like to recommend this insightful and interesting material which would help them learn to “think” more biblically and critically. It’s the type of book that will prove beneficial to pastors, college students, and every other Christian who faces the trends of mainstream culture.

By God’s grace, this little book, faithful as it is to the Word of God, popularly written and appropriately illustrated, will provide a resource to help those who are earnest about the recovery of *thinking* Christianly. I pray that God will use this book to assist the church to think in a Christian manner about everything!

John Sale
Carol Stream, Illinois

Prodigal Press: The Anti-Christian Bias of the American News Media

Marvin Olasky

Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books (1988).

\$10.99, paper, 246 pages.

The title for this book was chosen very carefully. A prodigal, as illustrated in the parable of our Lord, is one who wanders off from his true home and then wastes his inheritance in a faraway place. Marvin Olasky begins his book by reminding Christians that “American journalism is one of Christianity’s prodigal sons. Until the mid-nineteenth century American journalism was Christian” (p. xi). Still, it is hard for modern Christians, accustomed as they are to the hostility and ignorance of the modern media on matters relating to the historic Christian faith, to realize that the *New York Times* was founded by a Bible-believing Presbyterian.

Like Gaul, *Prodigal Press* is divided into three parts. The first describes the true Christian heritage of American journalism, and how journalists gradually began to trade in their birthright for a “mess of pottage.” For example, the early press was valiantly involved in the battle against abortion. But then Olasky shows how a certain kind of moralistic prudishness set in, replacing a clearheaded fighting for biblical morality, and the end was in sight.

The second section shows modern journalism in its current state of “Exile.” Fundamentally, this is the result of a humanistic ethical nihilism, which cannot find any basis for ethics apart from Christ. But, not surprisingly, the nihilistic monster has begun to devour itself. If there is no absolute basis for ethics in society, then there can be no absolute basis for *journalistic* ethics either. And if that is the

case, then what is to prevent journalists from just making up their stories? Olasky cites the well-known case of Janet Cooke's Pulitzer Prize-winning lie, as well as a number of other examples and illustrations of the media adrift.

The last section discusses the possibility of a return from exile. But as Olasky shows, this is unlikely unless there is some form of judgment on the wayward press. He begins by showing the likelihood of an economic judgment on the entrenched media elite. This judgment may come through competition from predictable sources (local television news shows, cable news, etc.), or from small bands of Christians led by modern journalistic Gideons. "When mass computerization opens up new opportunities by making the three-pound newspaper extinct, the Christian publication will be well-positioned to challenge non-Christian media services" (p.142).

Our culture has a great need for thinking Christians who think about their vocations in the light of God's Word alone. As a professor of journalism, Marvin Olasky has set a fine example of how this should be done; his book is highly recommended.

Douglas Wilson
Moscow, Idaho

***Pastors Off the Record: Straight Talk
About the Ministry***

Stephan Ulstein
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1993).
246 pages, paper, \$10.99.

When pastors feel free to talk candidly—when they speak "off the record"—what do they say about life in the minis-

try? The remarks of those represented in this resource are telling. "They [the congregation] burned me to a crisp.... I was going nuts." "You're given responsibility, but not authority." "That's what you do as a pastor. You have to run a guerrilla ministry." One minister speaks for all in Stefan Ulstein's unsettling collection of thirty-two interviews with clergy: "It's not easy to be a pastor."

Ulstein's interviews include black, Native American, and female ministers, and two Roman Catholic priests, who work in settings as diverse as a prison and the film-making industry in Hollywood. Most, however, are white Protestant men who pastor medium-sized, middle-class churches in mainline, evangelical and charismatic denominations. Several in the group have left the ministry for other vocations. One man has retired.

A sense of heaviness and disappointment pervades many of the interviews. Clearly, the ministers feel overstress in three significant ways. First, they complain of a loss of power. Several refer to a cultural shift in the authority that ministers once held over their congregations. Most, however, construe the loss in terms of time management. They are overworked, especially in the smaller denominations. There are few opportunities for relaxation, and the small amount of free time available to them often is spent in unscheduled counseling.

A second area of concern is relational. The ministers are lonely. Some have no close peer friendships at all, and their sense of isolation is acute. In addition, it is common for parishioners to hold performance expectations for the pastor and his family that are unrealistically high and perfectionist. Many pastors feel that their congregations do not respect them and that their work is not taken seriously.

The third and most frequently mentioned source of stress is confusion over what the role of the pastor should be. Should his or her work be pulpit-centered, people-

centered, or program-centered? Should the emphasis be placed on solving immediate social issues or on preparation for an eternal home? One frustrated minister describes himself as a “hired gun,” the one who orchestrates weddings, baptisms, and funerals. Another must deal with the congregational expectation, “You’re paid to love us.” Clergy with firm role convictions often may battle the idiosyncrasies of governing boards in their churches. One pastor, of a small physical stature, complained to his elders that the flowers in front of the pulpit blocked his view when he preached. The elders refused to move the bouquet because that was his view when he preached. The elders refused to move the bouquet because it was the traditional place for Sunday morning foliage. Role confusion, especially among Protestant clergy, is compounded by the issue of job security. This is less of a problem for chaplains and is no problem at all for the two Roman Catholic priests, whose role definition is one clearly prescribed and who also experience a high level of job satisfaction.

Not all the Protestant pastors, however, who are subjects in this volume are disgruntled. As a group the more contented clergy display two qualities that appear to equip them for a role that is tricky to play in modern American churches. First, they see themselves as spiritual leaders, somewhat set apart from the rest of the congregation. One after another, this group looks on ministry as a “calling” or a “gift,” not a profession or a career. Moreover, they view their calling as a lifestyle, as their comments make very plain to the reader. Thus, one minister who feels mildly irritated when one of his members requests on-the-spot counseling, gives it anyway because it is part of his calling. Others are able to delineate and limit their role by allocating responsibility in some areas to other qualified persons in the church. The contented pastors hold a realistic and balanced view of ministry. They accept the bad parts of

their job, and they don’t equate personal success with numbers. Most, but not all, see preaching as central to the work of the ministry.

The second striking characteristic of satisfied ministers is that they are psychologically and spiritually mature. They accept themselves with all their strengths and limitations. Their security does not rest in being liked, and they don’t try to control more than they humanly are able to do. They recognize the threat and the signs of burnout. They are not excessively rigid, and they make no claim for omniscience. They are moral, humble, and self-transcendent. One minister “repents a lot” in the face of difficulty and criticism. Significantly, they ground their ministry in prayer and Scripture study.

Despite the testimony of satisfied pastors, the tone of this book is more negative than positive. The author gives no rationale for his selection of interviewees. The question arises as to how representative such a group is of modern American ministry. In his brief and rather disappointing analysis of the interviews, Ulstein does raise two important questions: How shall we treat our pastors? And, what is their legitimate role? Many other questions come to mind. For example, what is the role of the church in modern society? How should the church deal with loss of pastoral authority? What style or styles of leadership should the minister assume? What is the place of theology in the modern church (several interviewees undermine its value)? Who is fit for the ministry? What can churches do to ease the transition from seminary to parish?

Pastors Off the Record contains a gold mine of anecdotal information for anyone, lay or clergy alike, who wants to enhance the work of ministry in his or her congregation. The book is a call for reformation—reformation, however, that is based on accurate knowledge. There is surely need for more rigorous research across several disciplines, in-

cluding biblical theology, church history and the related social sciences. In addition, there is need for reform at the level of pastoral education. As a motivator for urgent change, this work adds to the research that is needed to understand some of the concerns that affect ministers in our day.

Cassandra Niemczyk

Wheaton, Illinois

Rediscovering Holiness

J. I. Packer

Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications (1992).

276 pages, cloth, \$16.99.

Previous to having this book in hand, I had listed twenty references from the New Testament Epistles that call followers of Christ to a life of holiness. The conclusion I reached was that this subject, though clearly central to the New Testament, was being neglected in much of evangelical Christianity, including my own ministry. Therefore, it was with keen anticipation that I began to read this volume. I expected meat from Packer and I was not disappointed.

He writes, perceptively, in the first few pages:

Teaching on holiness has been largely forgotten, and that also is a pity, for it is central to the glory of God and the good of souls.... There was a time when all Christians laid great emphasis on the reality of God's call to holiness and spoke with deep insight about his enabling of us for it.... But how different it is today! To listen to our sermons and to read the books we write for each other, and then to watch the zany, worldly quarrelsome way we behave as Christian people, you would never imagine that once the highway of holiness was clearly marked out for Bible-believers, so that ministers and people knew what it was and could speak of it with authority and confidence (pp.12-13).

Packer develops the subject of holiness in this present work in eight chapters. These chapters define holiness and show why it is important and necessary. A panoramic view of the subject, given biblically, follows a clear consideration of where holiness begins in the work of genuine salvation. Repentance and healthy Christian experience are developed in terms of their involvement in Christian growth, and then the role of discipline and endurance is added. The flow of the chapters is both logical and rather easy to follow.

Packer stretches one's understanding by giving a comprehensive explanation of holiness. From our vague idea that holiness has something to do with being different, separated unto God and morally pure, Packer shows that holiness encompasses all that God desires believers to become in relationship to God, to their temperament, to their humanness and to their relationships with others. He includes extensive quotations from Bishop J. C. Ryle's important classic, *Holiness* (1879), to expand the reader's understanding of holiness and its importance.

As to the necessity of holiness, thirteen passages of Scripture are used to substantiate its great importance. Reading about its emphasis in the Bible one wonders what we've been reading, not to have given it the importance it deserves.

Each chapter is thoughtfully outlined. As the author carefully unfolds his case, he gives the reader a map he can pursue in making holiness central and vital in his life.

Two things are apparent as you progress through this book. First, the breadth of the topic is so much greater than one would have imagined. Second, you feel that you've known these things all the time, or at least that you should have. Packer takes what you know, organizes it clearly, expands it adequately and gives it back to you in a very comprehensive and readable way.

Perhaps the two best-known Packer books are *Knowing*

God and A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life. Often I have found laymen will have a particularly difficult time when they first attempt to read these two classics. In the present book Packer writes with an easier and more relational style that can be read quite easily by a much wider audience. His illustrations are helpful, and he applies the truth to himself as a means of teaching the reader. His treatment of repentance, a doctrine sadly neglected in our age, is of particular importance to all readers.

This book covers most questions that come to mind when one considers holiness. However, I wish two aspects of holiness had been developed further. On page 37 the author states that joy is an outgrowth of holiness. Further explanation of the “joy” and “delight” we experience as we pursue holiness would have been helpful in my view. Further, Packer believes the development of holiness requires real effort, conflict and suffering (chapter 9). But, I ask, how can we give more? How do we deal with the conflicts he refers to in this section? Applying more of this to practical life situations would have been useful to me.

For Packer truth is always carefully placed in the context of related truth. This means that *Rediscovering Holiness* touches on other related matters which must concern the thinking and growing believer. Topical examples included in this wider area include: sharing the doctrines of grace in an inoffensive manner; prayer and the will of God; and, doctrine, experience and practice—the three-legged stool of the Christian life. As a bonus this book is filled with great sermon ideas on many important aspects of genuine Christian faith.

There is a wealth of material here that will help all of us to preach and teach better the central desire of God for His own people. Dallas Willard might well have evaluated this work best when he says on the dust jacket of the book, “In recent years there has appeared no book more relevant to

the needs of the Christian life and ministry today.”

Paul H. Stenstrom
Wilmington, Delaware

From Mind to Heart

Peter Toon

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House (1987).

142 pages, paper, \$6.95.

Meditation is, without question, one of the greatly neglected disciplines among Christians in our day. And so Peter Toon, evangelical author and theologian, does the church a great service in calling us again to this essential means of grace in this book, *From Mind to Heart*.

Although short (142 pages), this book provides a well-balanced smorgasbord of food for thought on this important theme. Part One consists of four chapters highlighting the biblical teaching with regard to meditation. In Part Two, Toon discusses various Western Christian approaches to and methods of meditation. These include the “Evangelical way” (e.g., Luther, Müller), the “Counter-Reformation way” (Peter of Alcantara), the “Puritan way” (Edwards, Baxter), and group meditation (Robert Coulson, John Main). In his epilogue, Toon includes an example of his own approach, a sort of mixture, which he labels “an Anglican Approach.”

Toon’s chapters on the biblical teaching are, in the main, straightforward and predictable; the necessary bases are covered. However, also within these chapters are to be found what are perhaps some of the real “gems” of his thought on the subject. His discussion of the example of Jesus is both insightful and instructive. Since there is no explicit teaching with regard to our Lord’s example in meditation, Toon “reads between the lines” as it were, and

does so very ably, deducting from our Lord's teaching what surely formed its background: a mind and heart enriched with the truths and images of the Old Testament Scriptures. Similarly touched upon is our Lord's understanding—enlightened and informed through meditation—of His own ministry and identity as Messiah. What is highlighted here is of course the real humanity of our Lord. Toon expresses it best when he writes:

Though we confess that Jesus is the eternal Son of God made Man, the Word made flesh, we do not thereby minimize His human nature. To be truly human He must learn God's will for His life by the methods open to human beings—the study of Scripture, prayer, meditation, and contemplation in the context of living in trust, love and obedience.

It may seem strange to us, but He who (as eternal Son) is the final revelation of God to humankind also (as truly Man) had to receive that revelation for Himself. And that reception, though marvelously guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit, was still according to the normal workings of the human personality... (p. 44).

Toon discusses briefly the development of our Lord from childhood to manhood in a section very rich in thought. I found this section alone to be well worth the price of the book. But there is more.

In the chapter which follows, Toon engages in a very similar exercise as he considers the example of the apostle Paul. Briefly sketching some of the apostle's doctrinal teaching, he surmises what Old Testament themes and passages could well have been the objects of Paul's careful meditation, forming the substratum of his thought. Again what is brought into focus is the real human instrument in that divine work of inspiration, and Paul's example becomes then for us, not that of someone superhuman, but that of

one who was very much like us.

Chapters presenting the various approaches to meditation (Western) are especially helpful because of the practical examples therein; these are a great tool in helping one to understand meditation.

One of the galling weaknesses in the book comes in Toon's treatment of group methods of meditation. Here, while describing the methods of men such as Robert Coulson (b. 1899) and John Main (contemporary), there is a very obvious lack of biblical and theological criticism where one would wish to see it. For example, Toon quotes Laurence Freeman, a Roman Catholic, who catalogues what he (Freeman) views as the benefits of Main's less than biblical methods. Witness the following:

By silence of mind and spirit we are brought to that point of irreducible truth when we not only find ourselves, but lose ourselves.... Repetition purifies. The mantra will purify your heart, your consciousness, and bring you to that pure simplicity of a child.... stillness where we see the light clearly both within and around us (p. 112).

Comments of this kind raise serious doubts about Toon's views of biblical meditation. Does he approve this kind of thinking? Is he advocating this Eastern and non-Christian practice? He does admonish the reader that the methods "must be rooted deeply in . . . orthodox teaching" in order to be safe (p. 113). But how can a method which advocates the banishment of "all intellectual and imaginative activity of the mind" (p. 112) be rooted deeply in orthodox teaching? Toon weakly cites the old saying, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and adds that a growing number of people are claiming to have benefited from this method. This, however, is no proof as to the soundness of the method. We do well to remember that William Law, by faithfully, simply, and lovingly reciting his mantra ("love") landed himself in

the “la-la land” of universalism, a heresy. Again, the point is simply this: one would wish for a more specific, careful, biblical critique from Toon, especially when traveling down a road the mystics have used often to destroy the objective truth of the Gospel itself. The concept of the “mantra” needs careful exegetical critique. The ever-lurking danger seems to be that of forming abstractions of truth and thus failing to see it contextually and, so, truly. In defense of Toon, we know that his sympathies are most with the Puritans on the whole and the methods they advocate. I can imagine the old Puritans saying, “Brother Toon! Take out thy gun and shoot that beast!”

All in all *From Mind to Heart* provides good instruction and some good practical guidance for those who wish to sharpen themselves in the vital discipline of meditation. With the reservations I’ve already stated I believe Peter Toon has a wealth of good biblical and historical insights which will profit the discerning and critical reader.

Bruce Hollister

Joliet, Illinois

***Summa of the Summa: The Essential
Philosophical Passages of St. Thomas Aquinas’
Summa Theologica Edited and Explained for
Beginners***

Peter Kreeft

San Francisco: Ignatius (1990).

532 pages, paper, \$21.95, also available in cloth, \$35.

The Aquinas family wasn’t thrilled at the idea of Thomas becoming a Dominican monk, and so locked him up in the family castle for awhile in the hope that would change his

mind. It didn’t, and in A.D. 1245, at age 21, Thomas Aquinas traveled to Paris from his native Italy to enter the Dominican order. Until his death in 1274, at age 49, Aquinas studied, taught, and wrote. He was a large man, and his bulky frame, along with a naturally retiring nature earned him the nickname “The Dumb Ox” from his fellow students. His teacher, Albertus Magnus, recognized their error. “You call him a Dumb Ox,” he is recorded as saying. “I tell you that the Dumb Ox will bellow so loud that his bellowing will fill the world.”

The impact of Aquinas’ thought continues to be felt. Aquinas is recognized as “the primary theological Doctor (Teacher) of the [Roman Catholic] Church,” Kreeft reminds us.

During its proceedings, the Council of Trent placed the *Summa* on the high altar in second place only to the Bible.... You may not agree that St Thomas is history’s greatest philosopher, but he was certainly the greatest philosopher for the two thousand years between Aristotle and Descartes. He represents the medieval mind par excellence, and the Middle Ages are the parent and source of all the divergent streams in the modern world.

G. K. Chesterton, in his delightful biography of Aquinas, adds that

it is true to say that Thomas was a very great man who reconciled religion with reason, who expanded it towards experimental science, who insisted that the senses were the windows of the soul and that the reason had a divine right to feed upon facts, and that it was the business of the Faith to digest the strong meat of the toughest and most practical of pagan philosophies.

Aquinas is remembered for far more than simply being one of the premier philosophers of history. “The fact that Thomism is the philosophy of common sense,” Chesterton

observes, "is itself a matter of common sense." In a field where obscurity is often the order of the day, Aquinas is known for clarity and practical wisdom. On his deathbed, Kreeft says, Aquinas was found discussing three topics: a commentary on *The Song of Songs*, a paper on aqueducts, and a bowl of herring.

Thomas was also, apparently, a gifted public speaker and preacher. "During a Lenten series that he preached in Naples," R.C. Sproul records, "he had to stop in the middle of his sermon so that the congregation could have time to recover from their weeping." Thomas was remembered as "soft-spoken, affable, cheerful, and agreeable of countenance, good in soul, generous in his acts; very patient, very prudent; all radiant with charity and tender piety; marvelously compassionate towards the poor."

Aquinas also is remembered for mystical experiences, for a profoundly personal relationship with God. His prayer life was disciplined and deep, and his disciple Reginald claimed that Thomas "owed his knowledge less to the effort of his mind than to the power of his prayer. Every time he wanted to study, discuss, teach, write or dictate, he first had recourse to the privacy of prayer, weeping before God in order to discover in the truth the divine secrets." The *Summa*, though a massive 38 tracts, 631 questions, about 3000 articles, 10,000 objections and their answers, all in 3000+ pages, was never finished. While he was writing it Thomas experienced God's presence in a particularly powerful way. The reality of God was so majestic compared to his writing about God that he simply stopped. "I can do no more," Thomas told Reginald who urged him to continue. "Such things have been revealed to me that all I have written seems to me as so much straw."

Yet, Aquinas has a rather mixed reputation among Protestants. On the one hand, he has often been criticized by evangelical thinkers. When "theology is based partly upon

the Christian revelation and partly upon alien philosophical ideas, the result is often a misguided hotchpotch," Colin Brown writes.

There is much that is valuable in his writings and that well repays careful study, whether we are Protestant or Catholic. On the other hand, the non-Christian element in his teaching tends to neutralize so much of what is good. This comes out, for example, in his teaching on salvation. His exposition of the cross reveals penetrating insights into the New Testament message. But his non-Christian ideas cause him to read into biblical teaching such contradictory ideas as that man can accrue merit with God and so contribute to his salvation. Admittedly, Aquinas is at pains to qualify carefully what he says on this subject. Nevertheless, it is there. And it would not have been if he had subjected these ideas to the criterion of the New Testament.

Francis Schaeffer argued that in Aquinas is found the seeds from which modern humanism grew.

On the other hand, R. C. Sproul believes evangelicals owe a great deal to Aquinas, and that we have misunderstood what Thomas was teaching. "One of Francis Schaeffer's most serious charges against Saint Thomas," Sproul argues, "is the allegation that Thomas separated philosophy and theology. The charge is heard from other quarters as well, that Thomas separated nature and grace." That nature and grace are separated means that reality is divided into two watertight compartments. The higher compartment, grace, is where God and salvation and meaning and revelation can be found. The lower compartment, nature, is where the earth and things and woman and man are located. If they are separated, then there is no real connection between them, and mankind is left on its own to try to find significance and direction. If they are separated, then faith (which is related to grace and theology) is cut off from truth (which is related to nature, science, and philosophy). Is this what Aquinas

was arguing, as Schaeffer claims? Sproul says No. "It is the prerogative of the theologian to make fine distinctions," Sproul writes.

One of the most important distinctions a theologian can ever make is the distinction between a distinction and a separation. (This is the kind of distinction that yields Excedrin headaches.) There is a crucial difference between distinguishing things and separating them. We distinguish between our bodies and our souls. If we separate them, we die. We distinguish between the two natures of Christ. If we separate them, we fall into gross heresy.

To separate philosophy and theology, nature and grace, was the last thing Thomas Aquinas ever sought to do. It was precisely the issue he was combatting.... Aquinas was concerned to distinguish philosophy and theology, nature and grace, not to separate them.... Aquinas maintained consistently that ultimately there is no conflict between nature and grace. His posture was that grace does not destroy nature but fulfills it. What God reveals in the Bible does not cancel out what he reveals in nature.

One thing is certain: Thomas Aquinas is worth reading; his impact has been too great to be ignored. And now, thanks to the Thomist philosopher Peter Kreeft, there is an edited and annotated edition of the *Summa* to help us get started. *Summa of the Summa* "differs from all other books on St Thomas," Kreeft writes, "because it gives the words of Thomas himself, not a modern summary, but pared down to essentials, and with footnotes which do what a professor in a class would do." *Summa of the Summa* is as close as you can get to reading Aquinas with Peter Kreeft's assistance without attending Kreeft's philosophy classes at Boston College. It's a book for beginners, not for philosophers, and Kreeft's Introduction and footnotes are helpful guides.

Kreeft reminds us:

Timeless truth is always timely, but some aspects of truth are especially needed at some times, and it seems that our times badly need seven Thomistic syntheses: (1) of faith and reason, (2) of the Biblical and the classical, the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman heritages, (3) of the ideals of clarity and profundity, (4) of common sense and technical sophistication, (5) of theory and practice, (6) of an understanding, intuitive vision and a demanding, accurate logic, and (7) of the one and the many, a cosmic unity or "big picture" and carefully sorted out distinctions. I think it a safe judgment that no one in the entire history of human thought has ever succeeded better than St Thomas in making not just one but all seven of these marriages which are essential to mental health and happiness.

I recommend *Summa of the Summa* to you as a good introduction to the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas.

[For more information on *Summa of the Summa* or to request a catalog write Ignatius Press, 15 Oakland Avenue, Harrison, New York 10528 or call toll-free (800) 537-0390.]

Further valuable work on St. Thomas Aquinas the reader might consult the following: *Saint Thomas Aquinas: "The Dumb Ox"* by G.K. Chesterton (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1933, 1956; 197 pp.). *Philosophy and the Christian Faith: A Historical Sketch from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* by Colin Brown (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1968; 289 pp. + notes). R.C. Sproul on "Thomas Aquinas" in *Chosen Vessels: Portraits of Ten Outstanding Christian Men* edited by Charles Turner (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant, 1985; pp. 72-88).

Denis D. Haack
Rochester, Minnesota

Selling Jesus: What's Wrong with Marketing the Church?

Douglas D. Webster
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1992).
165 pages, paper, \$9.99.

Dining With the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity

Os Guinness
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House (1993).
113 pages, paper, \$5.99

Consider this headline, taken from the annual report of a Christian denomination. Do you see anything wrong with it? "200,000,000 Reached with Mass Media: The electronic miracle of radio and TV evangelism generates great breakthrough."

That's the question James Engel, Distinguished Professor of Marketing at Eastern College, raises in a recent issue of *Christianity Today*. Dr. Engel suggests there are several problems with the headline. First, he points out it is "disturbingly similar" to this headline, taken from a trade journal:

"The Sunchip Also Rises: FritoLay's multigrain salty snack, Sunchips, has generated over \$100 million in sales with \$30 million in advertising."

Second, Engel suggests the headline is an example of what is called "managerial missiology," which he defines as "an unduly pragmatic orientation" which "reduces missions to numerical analysis and marketing principles."

Third, it also happens to be a very misleading statement. The headline "represents faulty logic; no reputable marketer would ever make such a statement without valid evidence," Engel says.

When pressed, the mission board admitted it had no definitive factual basis for the claim that so many were reached by mass media. The most that could be said is that approximately this many people could have turned on their radios or TVs every time a program was aired. To say that a given number were reached is little more than wishful thinking. This claim was not only bad science, but defective missiology.

And fourth, the headline is an illustration of the need for discernment in our modern world. "The gospel," Engel reminds us, "is simply not a consumer product to be presented by mass-merchandizing methods." And yet that is precisely what the Gospel is reduced to when the church uncritically adopts modern marketing methods.

Though church growth statistics may seem impressive at first glance, the lemming-like race underway to apply marketing techniques to the church has been accomplished without much careful Christian reflection. At least until now. And that brings us to two books that are must reading for evangelicals who care about the integrity of the church, the substance of the Gospel, and the greater glory of God: *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong With Marketing the Church* by Douglas Webster; and *Dining With the Devil: The Megachurch Movement Flirts with Modernity*, by Os Guinness. Over the past few years seminars, tapes, and books have been churned out to train evangelical leaders how to become part of a movement of "church growth." For example, *Marketing the Church* and *User Friendly Churches* (both by George Barna) have been best sellers, and *An Inside Look at Ten of Today's Most Innovative Churches* (by Elmer Towns) tells how Barna's ideas have been applied in fast-growing churches that can

best be described as “market-driven.” It is not an exaggeration to say that many see the application of marketing techniques to the church as a great innovation, as perhaps the greatest single opportunity to fulfill the Lord’s command to take the Gospel to the entire world.

The problem is that the church growth movement has been developed and promoted with an appalling lack of discernment. Genuinely helpful insights are offered in packages which also contain ideas that are profoundly worldly, though they may be presented in a Christian guise. Most of the time, though, the lack of discernment has been masked by at least four factors:

First, the movers and shakers of the church growth movement—both the marketing experts and the pastors of the megachurches—have admirable motives. Surely they can’t be faulted in their desire to see the world evangelized in their generation. Nor are they mistaken in their effort to identify and use the best contemporary tools and techniques available to spread the Gospel. And, undoubtedly, large churches are often able to marshal resources, ministries, and opportunities that are out of the reach of smaller congregations. “I am convinced that God equipped us for a purpose,” George Barna has written in *Marketing the Church* (p. 28), “and that purpose is to expand the church.”

The second reason why the lack of discernment has often gone unnoticed is a pragmatic one: the ideas and principles of the church growth experts appear to work. They grow churches. And why argue with success? If, as Barna points out in *Marketing the Church* (p. 21), the church has been “losing the battle to effectively bring Jesus Christ into the lives of the unsaved population,” why criticize those who are growing churches instead of maintaining holy huddles?

Third, church growth experts have been careful to suggest that their ideas have biblical merit. “Jesus Christ was a communications specialist,” George Barna writes in *Mar-*

keting the Church.

He communicated His message in diverse ways, and with results that would be a credit to modern advertising and marketing agencies. Notice the Lord’s approach: He identified His target audience, determined their need, and delivered His message directly to them. By addressing the crowds on the mountain-sides, or the Jews in the Temple, He promoted His product in the most efficient way possible: by communicating with the “hot prospects” (p. 32).

Then, later in the same book Barna writes:

Don’t underestimate the marketing lessons Jesus taught. He understood His product thoroughly, developed an unparalleled distribution system, advanced a method of promotion that has penetrated every continent, and offered His product at a price that is within the grasp of every consumer (p. 50).

The constant effort to root their proposals in the Scriptures can lull the unwary, undiscerning, or busy reader into assuming these statements can be taken at face value.

And fourth, the lack of true discernment in the movement is masked by the fact that the church growth experts often appear to engage in critical analysis. “There is a fine line,” George Barna writes, “between clever marketing and compromised spirituality.” True enough, but realizing that is the easy part. The real challenge comes when that “fine line” must be identified by applying the truth of God’s Word to a church living in the midst of modernity.

Thankfully, this lack of discernment concerning “church growth” has been finally rectified. *Selling Jesus* and *Dining With the Devil* fit together well. It’s almost as if the authors collaborated. It’s rare when two books approach a topic without simply rehashing the same material, but that’s the case here. Not only is the reader not burdened by repetition, but each author has a unique style and each offers comple-

mentary and helpful insights. Though they address similar concerns, they do so from very different perspectives.

Selling Jesus was written by Douglas Webster, a teaching elder at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church in Colorado. Webster is a man who knows his Bible, has a pastor's heart, and who was concerned that the church might sacrifice its true nature in exchange for superficiality and mere numbers.

Dining With the Devil, was written by Os Guinness, a well-known writer and sociologist who lives in Virginia. Guinness is a man who has thought deeply about modernity, has a scholar's mind, and who is concerned that the church might be infused with worldliness instead of rocked by reformation and revival.

Selling Jesus is a careful, biblical, and balanced analysis of the ideas and techniques of the church growth movement in the light of Scripture. What is so refreshing is that Webster is so obviously committed to the high view of the church found in the Scriptures. This is not mere intellectual jousting, but an attempt to help us see the glory Christ intended for His church, a glory that has been all but forgotten in the excitement of being part of something that is growing ever larger. Webster ends the book with an appendix of sorts in which he lists what he calls "Practical Suggestions for the Household of Faith." His suggestions capture something of the concern that permeates the entire book. They also reveal something of Webster's wisdom and pastoral calling, and of how his main concern is to call the church back to God as we live in modernity. These suggestions do not arise from a mind-set that is contrary to growth; they are simply more concerned for the glory of God and the integrity of the church than they are for statistics and technique. Whether or not we have been impressed with the church growth movement, this list is a refreshing summary of faithful and biblical church life.

Practical Suggestions for the Household of Faith:

1. In an effort to take God more seriously than budgets and buildings, plan a monthly two-hour prayer session and Bible study for elders and ministry leaders.
2. Center the life of the church on worship.
3. Begin worship with quiet meditation and personal prayer.
4. Emphasize the importance of the sabbath principle for the rhythm and pattern of family and personal life.
5. Nurture a congregation of worshipers by weaning people from a spectator mentality and performance expectation.
6. Learn to pray the Psalms and practice the spiritual disciplines.
7. Restore to preaching its true purpose of guiding people in the whole counsel of God.
8. Permit seekers easy access to information about the church.
9. Integrate the proclamation of the Word of God on Sunday mornings with small-group ministries and youth programs.
10. Start early in training children to hear and interact with the Word of God.
11. Use the sacraments of the church, baptism and Holy Communion in a theologically thoughtful way.
12. Educate people in a disciple-making process that begins early and extends through life.
13. Prepare high school students to understand their culture from a Christian worldview.
14. Reverse the trend that makes the pastor more a manager than a theologian, more an administrator than a spiritual director, more a master of ceremonies than a worship leader.
15. Expect the household of faith to evangelize through its countercultural distinctiveness.
16. Stimulate Christian fellowship through an intentional Christ-centeredness.
17. Offer a training course for prospective leaders that

reviews the biblical expectations of leadership in the household of faith.

18. Encourage membership in the body through a nurturing program that stresses a clear confession of faith in Christ and an understanding of personal commitment and responsibility within the church.

19. Practice preventive and corrective church discipline.

20. Do not motivate people with guilt or challenge them with flattery.

21. Confront, rather than overlook, sinful behavior.

22. Network with believers from other cultures and with missionaries.

23. Pray to the Holy Spirit for an openness and sensitivity to the dynamic of God's work in your church.

24. Remember that the life of the church and the growth of the body are in God's sovereign care.

Dining With the Devil is written by a careful scholar who has the ability to write clearly and with deep spiritual insight. Guinness is especially gifted at identifying the subtle dangers of worldliness, of how we can be taken in without even realizing it. Guinness writes:

Modernity is most dangerous at its best, not its worst, when its benefits and blessings are unarguable. No civilization in history has offered more gifts and therefore has amplified the temptation of living "by bread alone" with such power and variety and to such effect. In today's convenient, climate-controlled spiritual world created by the managerial and therapeutic revolutions, nothing is easier than living apart from God. Idols are simply the ultimate techniques of human causation and control without God. God's sovereign freedom has met its match in ours. We have invented the technology to put God's Word on hold.

One Florida pastor with a seven-thousand-member megachurch expressed the fallacy well: "I must be doing

right or things wouldn't be going so well." One Christian advertising agent, who both represented the Coca-Cola Corporation and engineered the "I Found It" evangelistic campaign, paraded his golden calf brazenly: "Back in Jerusalem where the church started, God performed a miracle there on the day of Pentecost. They didn't have the benefits of buttons and media, so God had to do a little supernatural work there. But today, with our technology, we have available to us the opportunity to create the same kind of interest in a secular society." Put simply, another church-growth consultant claims, "five to ten million baby boomers would be back in the fold within a month" if churches adopted three simple changes: 1. "Advertise" 2. Let people know about "product benefits" 3. Be "nice to new people."

"Beware modernity bearing gifts." This warning should not be confused with the superspiritual fallacy that flatters the church as being purely spiritual and theological, turning up its nose at all lesser, "unspiritual" insights or techniques. Again, the issue is not either God or modernity, but which in practice is the decisive authority. The superspiritual error is simply the opposite extreme. Just as Christians are flesh and blood as well as spirit, so the church of Jesus Christ is in the business of pews, parking lots, and planning committees as well as prayer and preaching.

Therefore the latest scientific study on parking lots has its place. But this is a far cry from the dictum of the church-growth gurus that, "The No. 1 rule of church growth is that a church will never get bigger than its parking lot." "Its parking lot? A dead giveaway for the suburbanness of church growth. And No. 1? God forbid."

Dining With the Devil includes a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne "The Celestial Railroad." Hawthorne saw the dangers of the industrial and technological revolutions that were just getting underway. In "The Celestial Railroad" he rewrites Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* by imagining what the

pilgrimage would be like if transformed by modernity. *Dining With the Devil* is a book-length treatment of an essay which appeared in a shorter version in *No God But God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992). Some of the key ideas in *Dining With the Devil* also appeared in a series of eight brief essays in *Tabletalk* (beginning with the February 1992 issue). *Tabletalk*, by the way, is perhaps, the best daily devotional on the market. It is published monthly by Ligonier Ministries.

We recommend both *Selling Jesus* and *Dining With the Devil*. They are both worth reading and discussing with care. They represent a very needed corrective to a movement and mind-set which have infiltrated the evangelical mind and church so profoundly that few believers are able to recognize how deeply they have capitulated to the spirit of the age. By God's grace these two books may help believers use the helpful insights of our modern age without ceasing to walk by faith.

Editor's Note: "Will the Great Commission Become the Great Ad Campaign?" by James F. Engel (*Christianity Today*, April 26, 1993) pp. 26-28. For more information about *Tabletalk* or other aspects of the ministry of Dr. R. C. Sproul contact Ligonier Ministries, 400 Technology Parkway, Suite 150, Lake Mary, Florida 32746.

Denis D. Haack
Rochester, Minnesota

Amusing Ourselves to Death

Neil Postman

New York, New York: Viking Penguin, Inc. (1985).

184 pages, cloth, \$15.95.

Neil Postman is a critic, writer, educator, and communications theorist, as well as a professor of communication arts and sciences at New York University. As the back cover of the book states,

Television has conditioned us to tolerate visually entertaining material measured out in spoonfuls of time, to the detriment of rational public discourse and reasoned public affairs. Postman alerts us to the real and present dangers of this state of affairs, and offers compelling suggestions as to how to withstand the media onslaught. Before we hand over politics, education, religion, and journalism to the show business demands of the television age, we must recognize the ways in which the media shape our lives and the ways we can, in turn, shape them to serve our highest goals.

In his foreword, Postman compares the fears of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* to those of George Orwell's *1984*. Postman says,

What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there was no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us; Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture; Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture. In *1984*, Huxley added, people are controlled by inflicting pain; in *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us; Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us. This book is about the possibility that Huxley, not Orwell, was right.

The book, in a nutshell, is an indictment of the damage that television is doing to the modern mind. Citing our cultural preoccupation with being entertained, he proclaims that Las Vegas is the metaphor of our national character and aspiration, for Las Vegas is a city entirely devoted to the idea of entertainment, and as such proclaims the spirit of a culture in which all public discourse increasingly takes the form of entertainment. Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education, and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice. The result is, says Postman, that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death.

It takes no mental exercise whatsoever to see what the preoccupation with being entertained has done to the preacher and his sermons. The fastest growing churches in the land are those with "cabaret" motifs. Rock music and come-as-you-are are the order of the day. If our sermons are disliked, it is not because they were unbiblical, but because they were "boring." Usually, that means they were not entertaining enough; there weren't enough stories or jokes. As one colleague of mine has said, "Most sermons today consist of a moral, three jokes, and a poem!"

Postman shows how that when a culture was dominated by the printed word, people learned to think. Reading does that; it forces you to think about what you have read. Television trivializes everything by breaking life down into eight-minute segments, and, if the fare is too stimulating, you can always wait for the next McDonald's commercial to rescue you from having to think too much. Television has become the "Cliff Notes" of life! Postman reminds us of the Lincoln-Douglas debates of the last century and asks who today would stand and listen to seven hours of anything! He notes Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Charles Finney as great preachers with great logical minds. They

argued out their position in tracts and booklets, and the people of their day understood them. How it should shame us to realize that the uneducated farmers of Northampton understood Edwards' sermons while we, with our seminary educations, struggle to keep up! But theirs was a typographic culture, one built around written discourse, while ours is a photographic culture, built around pictures that do not require a response from the mind of the person viewing.

Chapter 8, titled "Shuffle Off to Bethlehem," is worth the price of the book. Postman talks about "Christian Television" and how it is mainly styled after "Entertainment Tonight." The programs usually include interviews, singers, and taped segments with entertainers who profess to be Christians. Of these programs he states,

... on television, religion, like everything else, is presented, quite simply and without apology, as an entertainment. Everything that makes religion an historic, profound, and sacred human activity is stripped away; there is no ritual, no dogma, no tradition, no theology, and, above all, no sense of spiritual transcendence. On these shows, the preacher is tops. God comes out second banana.

There are several characteristics of television and its surroundings that converge to make authentic religious experience impossible. The first has to do with the fact that there is no way to consecrate the space in which the television show is experienced. It is an essential condition of any traditional religious service that the space in which it is conducted must be invested with some measure of sacrality. But this condition is not usually met when we are watching a religious television program. The activities in one's living room or bedroom are usually the same whether a religious program is being presented or "Dallas" or "The A-Team." If the audience is not immersed in an aura of mystery and symbolic otherworldliness, then it is unlikely that it can call forth the state of mind required for a nontrivial religious experience.

The executive director of the National Religious Broadcasters sums up what he calls the unwritten law of all television preachers: "You can get your share of the audience only by offering people what they want." This is an unusual religious credo. There is no great religious leader who offered people what they want, only what they need. But television is not well-suited to offering people what they need. It is "user friendly." It is too easy to turn off. It does not accommodate complex language or stringent demands. As a consequence, what is preached on television is not anything like the Sermon on the Mount. Religious programs are filled with good cheer. They celebrate affluence. Their featured players become celebrities. Though their messages are trivial, the shows have high ratings; or, rather, *because* their messages are trivial, the shows have high ratings.

I believe I am not mistaken in saying that Christianity is a demanding and serious religion. When it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether!

Postman has written a provocative, challenging book. We have, most likely, been lulled to sleep by the ease with which information comes to us, but most of it is trivial. This book is a good start to seeing just how lulled we have become, and gives us some ideas to begin to fight back.

Don Kistler

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story

William Martin

New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. (1991).

735 pages, cloth, \$25.00

No minister of the Gospel of Christ has preached to more

people in person (more than 70 million), visited more countries (exceeding 70), dialogued with more dignitaries, and created a larger world-wide enterprise of evangelization than Billy Graham. His life casts an interpretive shadow over the last 40 years of evangelical life in North America, and, to a lesser extent, across the world. In a very real sense, the history of evangelical Christianity in America, since 1950, cannot be understood without a serious attempt to understand this one man, his public ministry and his personal life. In William Martin's biography we encounter the *tour de force* of Graham biographies. This will not be the last word on Billy Graham, but it is the most important one to date.

Martin, who is a graduate of Abilene Christian University and completed a Ph.D. at Harvard in 1969, is a professor of sociology at Rice University in Houston, Texas. He is a frequent contributor to publications such as *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, and *The Washington Post Magazine*. His analysis of religion, sometimes seen on Public Broadcast Service television programming, is trenchant and fair. His treatment of the Graham story and how it explains and defines evangelicalism in the last half of our century is in the same vein. A brief sampling of comments by advance readers who commend this book to readers indicates a diversity of appreciation for this important volume:

"This is religious biography at its very best. Thoroughly researched, lucidly written, and brilliantly crafted, it is sure to become a classic in the field of American religion" (Harry Stout, Yale University).

"This is a well-researched volume and a fascinating biography" (Norman Vincent Peale).

"Buy this book! A fascinating and well-documented account of Billy Graham's life ministry. Martin provides numerous key insights into the development and growth of the Evangelical movement over the past fifty years" (Billy Melvin,

Executive Director, National Association of Evangelicals).

"... one of the most important books ever written on American religious history. This is the biography of Billy Graham that has long been needed" (David E. Harrell, Auburn University).

How did Graham abandon fairly strong fundamentalism in his beginnings, to embrace a much more ecumenical and broader evangelicalism? What has kept him from the moral scandals that have tumbled media preachers in recent years? (This fact has even deepened the respect many people have for Graham.) What was behind some of the better known controversies of Graham's ministry, controversies such as his relationship with presidents, especially Richard Nixon, whose funeral service he recently conducted, and Lyndon Johnson. (Until Martin's biography I did not know just how close Graham was to LBJ.) Why did Graham organize the now famous international conferences on evangelism, beginning with Berlin in 1966 (later followed by Lausanne and Amsterdam)? How did the fortnightly *Christianity Today* begin, and what was Graham's role in this venture? How did he get into the Soviet Union in 1982 and conduct extensive preaching missions? (Why did he respond to the media, as he did, regarding repression in the Soviet Union?) These, and hundreds of other significant and interesting questions, are taken up candidly, fairly, and adroitly by the biographer.

Martin allows the story to unfold without developing a central argument regarding Graham's ministry, yet several significant themes emerge that Grant Wacker observed in a review of this biography. Says Wacker, "One [theme, i.e.] is the 'cozy symbiosis' between church and state that marked Graham's career from the beginning." It is generally known that Graham has been counselor to American presidents for years. What is demonstrated on page after page in Martin's treatment is just how close this relationship has been and

some of the problems it has presented to Dr. Graham. Writes Wacker (*Christian Century*, April 1, 1992), himself an evangelical historian:

There is considerable irony in Graham's insistence, especially before Nixon's debacle, that his ministry transcended politics. He seems never to have grasped that perennial hobnobbing with presidents and secretaries of state telegraphed approval of current policies, or that he could not credibly declare that there was no American he admired more than Nixon and then insist on his impartiality in the next election.

In a note that Graham sent to Nixon near the end of the President's second year in office, he said, "My expectations were high when you took office nearly two years ago but you have exceeded [them] in every way! You have given moral and spiritual leadership to the nation at a time when we desperately needed it—in addition to courageous political leadership! Thank you!" Adds Martin, Graham signed this letter, "With Affection." When one reads Martin's account he discovers just how thoroughly Graham and his ministry were "used" by the Nixon White House. One Graham associate confided to Martin, "Billy still has no idea of how badly Nixon snookered him." A caution to evangelicals, regarding power and its nature, needs to be sounded, and this book may be a positive step in that direction. When we have spent a decade pursuing the agenda of culture wars a book like this might open a few eyes to the serious dangers which exist in using the power of government in the cause of the Gospel.

Another strand of thought developed by Martin is Graham's role as a leader of evangelicalism and the increasingly moderating influence he has had upon this movement over the past several decades. Though Billy Graham does not speak for all evangelicals, for sure, he has become a kind

of symbol for the majority. Sociologically, culturally, and particularly theologically, Graham has been the symbolic leader and spokesman for what has been called the New Evangelicalism (a term that came from the late Harold Ockenga and others). Writes Wacker again, "Martin intimates that it was Graham, above all, who midwived evangelicalism into existence in the 1950s, giving it a genial identity separate from the sulfuric fulminations of the fundamentalists." I can still remember, as a young boy, trying to figure out the differences between fundamentalism and evangelicalism. The answer I formed, in my own childish way, was this: A fundamentalist *opposed* Billy Graham, an evangelical *supported* him. My answer, simplistic and childish as it was, was not too far from the truth, even to this day. Truly, when historians come to evaluate evangelicalism since 1950, they will begin their consideration with Billy Graham, for better and for worse.

Another major contribution of this biography is the perceptive dealing of the author with Graham's resistance of segregation. How Graham kept the balance (tension?) between activist civil rights campaigns and stand-pat segregationism is interesting reading and brought back loads of memories for me, a white southerner. Many will fault Graham, but most of us will likely admire him for his general direction in this extremely difficult arena.

One of the most helpful contributions of this biography, especially in contrast to previous ones, is that Martin begins by seeking to place Billy Graham in the historical stream of American revivalism. The author shows how modern revivalism traces its history to Charles G. Finney in the last century. From Finney, through Moody and Sunday, we come to Graham, who, in a rather astounding providence, came to make a public profession of faith in Christ the same night that Billy Sunday died, November 6, 1935.

To the mind of this reviewer evangelicals need to under-

stand much more clearly that "crusade evangelism," calling for sinners to "come forward" (or go to the altar, or mourner's bench), and massive city-wide meetings which are highly organized, promoted and followed-up, are all elements of recent Christian history, one that in *practice* repudiates the theology of the Protestant Reformation. It seems that most contemporary evangelicals believe these practices, and all that attends to them, are both "orthodox" as well as ancient. After the early stages of the Second Great Awakening, in the first few decades of the 1800s, such methods were developed and became increasingly popular. Prior to this time both theological and methodological concerns would have prompted earlier evangelicals to oppose such measures. What happened? Martin answers this question in ways that will profoundly interest the careful reader. We may be entering a time when mass evangelism, of the revivalistic variety, could fall on hard times. What will our response be? It would be helpful to know our history better at this point. And for those of us committed to the recovery of a historic Reformation theology, we find this day filled with hope for a deep recovery.

The reader will not find all he wants to know about Graham in this volume. For example, his personal life is treated with candor and warmth, but there is more many of us would like to know. His marriage to the remarkable Ruth Bell is told with considerable human interest. His developing use of the crusade ministry is narrated but at times questions remain, such as why did the most famous evangelical minister in the United Kingdom, the late D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, never support Graham Crusades, yet met with Billy in private and was very cordial toward him as a person? Or why does Graham seem to show little understanding of significant theological issues that relate to soteriology? (I personally found it surprising that Billy's dad taught the *Westminster Confession of Faith* to him as a

boy, yet Graham plainly rejects, or at best misunderstands, whole portions of this document's teaching on *how* God saves the sinner. What happened? Why?) What has Graham learned from the associations he had with Johnson, Nixon, et al., since Watergate? Martin tells us virtually nothing. (Graham's presence at the White House on the night of January 16, 1991, raises some of the *same* questions all over again, as this was the evening President Bush decided, after praying, to begin bombing Baghdad.)

I find the subtitle of this impressive book both interesting and distressing. It does seem that Billy Graham is "A Prophet with Honor." He has proven himself to be the kind of Christian role model that many of us can still respect as a person. Yet it seems to me that evangelicals are far too preoccupied with being "honored" by one another and sometimes even by the world at large. It seems the pendulum has swung quite far to one side in the tension that sometimes exists between the love of truth and the love of people. In reaction to harsh fundamentalism many evangelicals seem more and more interested in what works, and whether or not it finds audience approval and acceptance. Truth is often trampled in the streets! Have we honored our prophets more than we should? Have we looked for pleasantness, rather than prophetic conviction that disturbs us?

Martin, with the helpful cooperation of Billy Graham himself, has written a truly significant book. I hope many evangelicals will read it with an open mind, and ask some honest questions about their own faith and practice. And I hope we all will give thanks for the grace of God displayed in the life of William Franklin Graham, even those of us who long for a deeper and stronger theological preaching from our evangelists!

Editor

I believe I am not mistaken in saying that Christianity is a demanding and serious religion. When it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether.

Neil Postman

The one thing this mind renewal does not mean is what most people probably assume it does mean, and that is to start thinking mainly about Christian subjects...it is possible to think Christianly about even the most mundane subjects.

James M. Boice

The sphere of the intellectual, the sphere of knowledge and understanding, is not a sphere in which the Christian gives ground, or even tolerates vagueness and confusion. There is no charity without clarity and firmness.

Harry Blamires

Christianity does not set its mind on high things. It is uneasy when it hears men speaking loudly and with confidence about “creative evolution”; when it marks their plans for perfecting the development of pure applied science, of art, of morals and of religion, of physical and spiritual health, of welfare and well-being. Christianity is unhappy when men boast of the glories of marriage and of family life, of Church and State, and of Society. Christianity does not busy itself to support and underpin those many “ideals” by which men are deeply moved—individualism, collectivism, nationalism, internationalism, humanitarianism, ecclesiasticalism. Christianity is unmoved by Nordic enthusiasm or by devotion to Western culture, by the visions of Youth or by the solid and mature wisdom of middle age.... It watches with some discomfort the building of these eminent towers and its comments always tend to slow down this busy activity, for it detects therein the menace of idolatry....

Seeing men balanced midway between earth and heaven, and perceiving the insecurity of their position, it finds itself unable to place serious confidence in the permanence of any of these human high places, in the importance of any of these “important” things, or in the value of any of these “values.” Christianity perceives men moving, it is true, but moving to deprivation. It beholds a hand shaking the foundations of all that is and will be. It hears the joists creaking mysteriously. Christianity cannot simply disregard what it has seen and heard.

Karl Barth
