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BOOK REVIEWS

*THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS: PERSPECTIVES ON
PAUL'S MISSION—IN HONOUR OF PETER T. O'BRIEN*

Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson, editors
Leicester: Apollos/Downers Grove, Illinois:
InterVarsity, 2000
429 pages, paper, \$27.99

Peter T. O'Brien has long been recognized as one of the finest evangelical New Testament scholars of our day. His 1977 volume on the introductory thanksgivings in the Pauline corpus, for example, is a standard in the study of Pauline prayer and piety. And it bears the hallmark common to his scholarship: "the wedding together of academic work and the ministry of God's Word" (3). This volume of essays seeks to honor O'Brien on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday.

Along with an appreciation of O'Brien by Peter F. Jensen, there are twenty-three essays. Often in such a collection, the quality can vary considerably. This volume is exceptional in that the overall quality of the papers is high, as they present a well-rounded picture of the Pauline mission and its long-term impact.

This reviewer especially found the following papers informative and edifying: Andrew Shead on "The New Covenant and Pauline Hermeneutics," an examination of the way Jeremiah 31 shapes Paul's interpretation of the

New Covenant; I. Howard Marshall's demonstration of the accuracy of the portrayal of Paul's mission in Acts; Donald A. Carson's examination of why Paul's prayers contain so little explicit reference to mission; Bruce Winter's study of the dangers that Paul had to face in his missionary labors; and Andreas S. Köstenberger's, "Women in the Pauline Mission."

One particularly fascinating paper is Peter Bolt's, "The Philosopher in the Hands of an Angry God," which looks at the way Paul's preaching would have been received by Middle Platonism as typified in the thought of Plutarch (c. 46–c. 120). Unlike two other regnant philosophies of the first century A. D., Stoicism and Epicureanism, Middle Platonism affirmed the immortality of the soul. Despite this, however, Bolt shows the way Paul's gospel would have turned the worldview of Middle Platonism upside down, something the gospel did with so much else in the ancient world.

All in all, this is a most refreshing collection of studies of what is a paradigmatic mission for all who claim to be Christians.

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**GRASPING FOR THE WIND: THE SEARCH FOR
MEANING IN THE 20TH CENTURY.**

John W. Whitehead
Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2001)
320 pages, cloth, \$37.99

As founder and president of the Rutherford Institute, attorney John Whitehead is consistently in the news.

One of his latest and more publicly covered cases was as the representative of Paula Jones in her lawsuit against former President Bill Clinton. His culture-watch magazine, *Gadfly*, has a good feel for the pulse of American culture and an impressive Internet presence. His knowledge of history and culture bears upon his latest book, *Grasping for the Wind*, a work which is also available in video form and has won many awards.

Finishing at 320 pages (only a third of its original length), *Grasping* consists of seven chapters. Beginning with the Enlightenment in chapter one and the movements resulting from its work to the final chapter which culminates in the "narcissistic culture" of today, Whitehead displays his vast knowledge of people, art, philosophy, music, and politics. The book contains a brief afterword with Whitehead's final conclusion resulting from his research. The bibliography is extensive and useful for any student of the movements discussed by Whitehead.

Although Whitehead covers many important figures and events throughout history since the time of the Enlightenment, the book itself is by no means complete. Whitehead offers this disclaimer, "*Grasping for the Wind* is not intended to be a scholarly text, nor is it exhaustive on the subjects discussed. Instead it is, in many instances, an interpretive view of various people and events, intended for the reader who wishes to better understand modern Western culture in the past century" (11). This is a wise disclaimer, considering the great end this book seeks to accomplish. Whitehead offers answers to the questions, "Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? and How did we get here . . . ?" (16). Essentially, Whitehead follows the trail left behind in humanity's search for meaning. This is almost akin to writing a book that seeks to solve the meaning of the universe. For many historians, these thesis questions are entirely too broad.

But the book itself intends to be no more than snapshots of history and thought, which is well represented by the cover photos of Einstein, the Beatles, Martin Luther King, and others.

With a book of this size, two factors could damage its potential for impact. First, Whitehead's ambitious work could easily be accused of reductionism (reducing causes to a concept so simple that it does not capture the complexity of causes that usually surround historical happenings). Second, when one analyzes contemporary culture one must be entirely tuned to culture's current icons and offerings in order to avoid irrelevancy.

Regarding the potential factor of reductionism, Whitehead time-travels to the period of the Enlightenment, discussing staples such as Voltaire, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His discussion of Romanticism, the revolutions of France, and Realism presents to the reader the menagerie of thought and passions that shaped our modern world: one example of Whitehead's method is his connecting of the influence of French Poet and anti-Christian antagonist, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91), to musician Bob Dylan (44).

Characters such as Darwin, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, the French Impressionists, Symbolists, Cubists like Picasso, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Hitchcock, T. S. Eliot, James Dean, Martin Luther King Jr., Madonna, George Lucas, and Tim Burton are but a sampling of the drama of history and its cast members introduced within the cloth binding of *Grasping*. Because Whitehead seeks to cover so many figures in a work reduced at publication to only a third of its original capacity, he appears at times to oversimplify "influences."

It is this oversimplification that could lead an historian to charge Whitehead with reductionism. For example, the conclusion of Whitehead that our modern dilemma began at the Enlightenment may be disputed (274). No one

would deny the traumatic effect of the Enlightenment, but so also no one would divorce the Enlightenment from the history that preceded it or write almost as if the movement was spawned within a vacuum.

However, one could also note that Whitehead's utilization of so many people and movements indicates he understands the complexity of history. Yet, even in his treatment of each person there is a tendency to breeze through their story, essentially boiling down the complexity of their contribution to simple statements. Not enough attention is afforded important figures such as Albert Einstein (less than one page in length), a section which leaves the reader with a less-than-adequate understanding of Einstein's historical significance. At the same time, the telling but less significant movie, *Apocalypse Now*, is given more than two pages of consideration (205-207). In the final chapter, Whitehead passes through so many events, musicians, movies, and actors that one feels like one is sitting home flipping channels on the television, viewing flashes of content without much context.

Despite these problems Whitehead's ambitious endeavor still gives the reader a sense of how the world we live in today is so closely connected with the past. *Grasping* leaves the reader with the overwhelming sensation that one has been unknowingly manipulated by influences that began long before one's birth.

The second factor, that the book must be relevant, is harder to gauge. The chapter titled "The Narcissistic Culture" guides the reader through a panoramic of the last thirty years. At times I felt that Whitehead's mention of events and people of the nineties and the new millennium was meager in comparison to his attention to detail in the sixties, seventies, and early eighties. This seems unusual considering the cutting-edge nature of *Gadfly*. I assume that more would have been added if the book was allowed its

full length: a mistake the publisher should not have made. Whitehead does mention significant contemporary musicians such as Nirvana, Limp Bizkit, and Britney Spears, and television shows such as *COPS*, *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, and *X-Files*; yet his greater interest and knowledge of the sixties and seventies shows through.

What struck me most was Whitehead's impressive knowledge of art history and the philosophies that guided movements like Impressionism. He includes some color plates of the art he discusses: a helpful tool for making his point. Whitehead respects the stylistic qualities of the Impressionists, while at the same time leading the reader to understand the philosophical reasoning behind the technique.

This book is valuable as a first-year college text. An appropriate application by the student would be to read the text and research an assigned figure or movement in light of Whitehead's work, to determine if Whitehead read those historical figures accurately. This book would also be a useful roadmap for self-education: if one read one work of every author Whitehead mentions, listened to one CD of every musician, and studied one painting of every artist, one would walk away with an excellent overview of modern culture.

Whitehead's conclusion is refreshing for any Christian. He reasons that we are at the "end of a long experiment" which began with the Enlightenment and which "altered traditional concepts of religion, art, music and life itself" (274). This is demonstrated, for example, by modern advances in biology. Such conceptual experimentation has allowed for a re-sequencing of the factors that define humanity. A "restoration of hope and beauty begins with an appreciation for the uniqueness of each human being" (275). We are currently in a "heightened state of historical crisis" where "only the spiritual will remain" (275): a valu-

able analysis in an era that challenges the definition of value.

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FIVE WOMEN OF THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

Paul F. M. Zahl

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans (2001)

120 pages, cloth, \$18.00

Paul Zahl, dean of the Cathedral Church of the Advent (Episcopal) in Birmingham, Alabama, offers an invigorating presentation of five women who were active participants in the English Reformation. Anne Boleyn, Anne Askew, Katharine Parr, Jane Grey, and Catherine Willoughby "muscularly and monocularly" strove for the furtherance of the Reformed faith in their nation (2). Although he includes biographical information, Zahl's focus is their theological perspectives regarding the church, the nation of England, and their own sufferings brought about by the boldness of their faith.

The book opens with an introduction, in which Zahl identifies the women he has chosen to feature, as well as the criteria for their selection (and why, for example, Elizabeth Tudor is not included). Two sources are given for his interpretation: writings and letters, and recorded conversations.

Here the author asks an important question: What role did gender and position play in the dramas of their lives? Zahl demonstrates how both impacted them positively and negatively. The best example is found in Anne Askew, who often used her gender defensively to taunt her examiners about their fears of a "silly woman's" opinions. But being

the one woman in the group not of royal blood, she was considered easily expendable by the king. Significantly, Zahl points out that the issue faced by these women was not gender or class, but freedom: their concern was not that they were women without freedom, but that they were Protestants without freedom.

Each woman is the focus of one chapter, documenting her life in brief, examining the texts she left behind, describing her theology, and interpreting her beliefs and actions. In an interesting touch to each chapter, the author also delineates the woman's contemporary "soul mate"—a guardian, publisher, or friend—as well as her theological or political nemesis.

It is in the main body of the text that we meet the "nursing mothers" of the English Reformation (6). The "first phase" of the Reformation, which focused on the doctrinal issue of justification by grace through faith, began with Anne Boleyn, known to students of Western civilization simply as one of Henry VIII's queens. But she had an impressive theological library, supported William Tyndale, and was eventually beheaded for her Protestant convictions. Katharine Parr, another of Henry's wives, wrote a remarkable devotional book entitled *Lamentation of a Sinner* and narrowly avoided execution, surviving Henry.

The women of the "second phase" debated the physical presence of Christ in the mass. Jane Grey, the child prodigy who wrote to Heinrich Bullinger for help studying Hebrew, left behind an articulate written testimony when she was beheaded at the age of 16. So did Anne Askew, who was tortured and burned at the stake.

Catherine Willoughby represents the "third phase," when the focus of the Reformation was on the doctrines of providence and election; she studied Scripture with the other women and protected preacher Hugh Latimer until forced into exile with her nursing daughter. The author

allows these women to speak for themselves, as theologians of intense convictions.

Following these five chapters is a brief conclusion. An epilogue by the author's wife, Mary Zahl, offers an application of such a study to our modern lives. Mary's attempt to picture these women in today's world of significantly different perspectives on gender seems somewhat incongruous with what the women themselves clearly saw as important. But her enthusiasm for the presentation of such role models is seconded, and her questions of application are excellent and worthy of careful introspection.

Possibly the most valuable aspect of the book are the several appendices which include a partial royal family tree, a suggested reading list, and a sampling of the texts discussed, including letters of Thomas Cranmer and Catherine Willoughby, the court records of the examinations of Anne Askew and Jane Grey, and an excerpt from Katharine Parr's book.

Zahl declares his method as that of a systematic theologian, not an historian, and this is verified by his overall inattention to details to which historians would perhaps attribute more importance. Certainly the available sources, though not numerous, have not been exhausted. Additional historical, biographical, and textual work could add immensely to our understanding of these women, since we currently know so little. But Zahl's common sense attitude successfully avoids misdirecting the reader's attention from the goal of personal confrontation by these five extraordinary individuals.

Zahl is well read and relevant. This is demonstrated by his appropriate and often entertaining references to everyone and everything from Jane Austen, John Donne, Bill Clinton, and the Rolling Stones to Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, the French poetry of Agrippa d'Aubigné, the *Godfather* movies, and Snow White. He is also articulate, economiz-

ing his words to produce a potent work that reads only 120 pages.

Most evident to the reader is the author's passion. Clearly this book was not written simply to contribute another volume on the Reformation, but to ignite the reader's soul with the zeal of the book's subjects. Zahl identifies with these women, engages their tight-fisted convictions, and emerges with a spirit of theological aggression and fortitude that many modern Christians have forgotten. His work is valuable to anyone desiring to expand his or her knowledge of the English Reformation and is recommended for devotional reading as well as home schooling curriculum, college courses, and additions to pastoral and church libraries.

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TRUTH FOR ALL TIME

John Calvin
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth (1998)
98 pages, paper, \$5.99

*T*uth for All Time is a translation of John Calvin's *Brève instruction chrétienne*, his *Brief Outline of the Christian Faith*. Stuart Olyott relates the history of this work in his introduction to the translation, which he did himself. Written in the winter of 1536-1537 to nurture those who had joyfully discovered biblical Christianity, the work was soon superseded by Calvin's 1542 catechism. But Olyott is right to stress that the work is "a precious jewel" (vii), for in it we have "the very core of Protestant belief and feel the warmth of its ardent love for God and man" (ix).

The work follows the order of the first edition of the *Institutes*, covering knowledge of God and humanity, the law, faith, prayer, the sacraments, and the relationship of church and state. It really is an excellent introduction to Christianity.

The section on faith, for example, covers, in a brief compass, such things as election, predestination, the nature of genuine faith and its fruits, repentance, and the new birth, as well as the affirmations of the *Apostles' Creed*. The section on prayer is equally rich and an excellent guide to one of the most important spiritual disciplines. It is noteworthy that in the final 1559 edition of the *Institutes* the largest section is on prayer. The section on prayer in this *Brief Outline* is a sampling of that larger discussion.

The Banner of Truth Trust is to be commended for publishing this fine work.

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