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BOOK REVIEWS

WHOREDOM: GOD'S UNFAITHFUL WIFE IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Raymond C. Orlund, Jr.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans (1996).

200 pages, paper, \$18.00.

The purpose of this fine book by Orlund, who teaches Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is to explore the metaphor of God's marriage to His covenant people, and their unfaithfulness to Him as "whoredom." Although this is not simply a word study of the Hebrew root *znh* ("to commit fornication, to be a harlot"), this is the controlling idea. Actually, since he acknowledges, rightly in my judgment, that the root designates "illegitimate sexual involvement, the dark reversal of the marital ideal" (p. 26), perhaps "sexual impurity" or "adultery" would be a more apt (but less arresting) title, since no commercial associations belong to the Hebrew word as such.

The first chapter, "In the Beginning: Human Marriage as 'One Flesh,'" lays the foundation for the study by treating Genesis 2:18-24. He sums up:

Human marriage is premised in the making of the woman out of the very flesh of the man, so that the bond of marriage reunites what was originally and literally one flesh. All other

relational claims must yield to the primacy of marital union. It requires an exclusive, lifelong bonding of one man with one woman in one life fully shared. It erects barriers around the man and woman, and it destroys all barriers between the man and the woman. God so joins them together that they belong fully to one another, and to one another only (p. 23).

This is well put, and I hope he writes to apply it in an exploration of human marriage; but in any case we can see that for God to use this as an image of His relationship to His people shows, not only the outrage of unfaithfulness ("whoredom"), but also the ecstasy of faithful adherence ("destroys all barriers").

Chapter two is titled "Playing the Harlot." Here Ortlund considers the employment of the metaphor in the Pentateuch and Judges, which lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible. He concludes, "the clearest marital images early in the story of the covenanted people are Israel's whoredom and Yahweh's jealousy in return. From the beginning, the marriage was strained. That tension will break out into open conflict in the prophetic literature" (p. 45).

The topic of chapter 3, "Committing Great Harlotry," is the use of the metaphors in Hosea, especially Hosea 1-3, which are based on Hosea's own experience as a cuckolded husband. Ortlund gives a brief, but sensible, discussion (in footnotes) to the question of what Hosea is actually asked to do in 1:2, i.e., what kind of woman is Gomer. Although his discussion is not full or conclusive, it becomes clear from his exposition that he takes the command to marry "a woman of harlotry" to be an anticipation of Gomer's adultery rather than a description of her premarital behavior (rightly in my view; cf. comments on the meaning of the Hebrew root *znh* above). He also considers the woman of Hosea 3 to be Gomer (again, rightly in my view). The threat of exile is disciplinary: "The life of whoredom she

[Israel] has chosen must be purged from her national soul; but through all the agony required for the cleansing to be thorough, nothing will be able to separate her from the love of Yahweh" (p. 75).

Chapter 4, "Under Every Green Tree," shows how Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah make use of the metaphor. The tragedy of these prophets' ministries is that, as Ortlund says, "the reality of their marital union with Yahweh makes astonishingly little impression on them" (p. 99).

Chapter 5, "In Every Public Square," is devoted to Ezekiel's use of the image, particularly in the graphic chapters, Ezekiel 16 and 23. The chapter opens:

After the sobering messages of Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah, it would be understandable if the follower of the biblical story were to flinch at yet another prophetic encounter. But it is the false prophets who heal the wound of God's people lightly. Their diagnosis is superficial, and their prescription is ineffective. The serious reader of the Bible, turning to the true prophets, takes courage from the fact that the biblical drama is not only a story of outrageous betrayal, but also one of the costly redemption bringing infinite ecstasy (p. 101).

These parts of Ezekiel speak of fierce judgment on the Lord's unfaithful wife; but the judgment will have the purpose of putting an end, not to the covenant people, but to their waywardness. Hence judgment is not the end of Ezekiel's story.

In chapter 6, "The Ultimate Marriage as 'One Spirit,'" Ortlund begins his treatment of the New Testament passages that take up this theme. These include places where Jesus calls His contemporaries "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matt. 12:38-39; 16:4; Mark 8:38), and those where he uses wedding imagery, with Him as the bride-

groom (e.g., Matt. 9:14-15; 22:1-2; 25:1; John 3:28-30), showing that this Old Testament theme was alive and well in the teaching of Jesus. In the letters we have James 4:4; 1 Corinthians 6:15-17; 2 Corinthians 11:1-3; Ephesians 5:31-32; and in Revelation we have 14:4; 19:6-9; 21:1-3, 9-10, closing with 22:17.

All of these passages are well discussed, and I'll mention a few of his insights. In his treatment of 1 Corinthians 6:15-17, Ortlund shows that here we find, not simply the covenant people as the bride, but the individual believer as "brought into spiritual union with the Lord, analogous to sexual union" (p. 145). I was previously opposed to this idea because of misuses of the Song of Solomon, but Ortlund handles the subject well and changed my mind. (Interestingly, he makes no comment on traditional uses of the Song!) And on Ephesians 5:31-32 he has a careful comparison of the New Testament passage with its antecedent in Genesis 2, and shows that "every human marriage is truest to itself when it points beyond itself, representing something of Christ and the church in their perfect union" (p. 159). The closing discussion of the Revelation passages reaches its delightful conclusion that "the suffering church militant of this present evil age is to cultivate one great impulse throbbing in her soul, *viz.*, an aching longing for the Bridegroom to come to her, to take her in His arms, with nothing within herself to wrest herself away, and to be held there forever" (p. 168).

The final chapter, "Concluding Reflections," sums up the study and warmly draws some pastoral applications. For example, "the gospel tells the story of God's pursuing, faithful, wounded, angry, overruling, transforming, triumphant love. And it calls us to answer Him with a love which cleanses our lives of all spiritual whoredom" (p. 173). He shows how this explains why the gospel lays claim to the whole of our lives, because it brings us into a marriage. He discusses

how this would affect the church's relationship with worldly political powers, and how "faithfulness requires a careful monitoring of ourselves" (p. 175).

The appendix, "The Harlot Metaphor and Feminist Interpretation," treats briefly some postmodern exegesis of those who "have given up on the Bible as hopelessly misogynist, at least at certain points. To be redeemed, the biblical text must be deconstructed" (p. 177). He shows that the accusation of misogyny is untrue, and that the trend is an expression of "nihilistic hermeneutics in the academic world at large" (p. 181). There is hope in "personal illumination from the Holy Spirit of God [which] establishes a commitment to objective truth" (p. 184). The more the reader understands postmodern hermeneutics, the more this compressed but insightful appendix will be (it would not serve as an introduction to the topic).

This book is a pleasure to read and is recommended for several reasons. First, it is biblical theology which actually arises from exegesis of the text. Ortlund is careful in his argumentation, and has many technical details in the footnotes. Even though this reviewer does not agree with every one of his detailed positions (particularly in his agreement with the RSV and NRSV to emend the text at difficult places), it is encouraging to see such attention paid to those details, and I did not find any real disagreement with the main flow of his theological argument. Further, Ortlund interacts with a broad spectrum of authors—not only the standard modern critical authors and their evangelical counterparts, but classical Christian authors such as Calvin, Lapse, Grotius, and Henry (judiciously quoted). He even makes use of medieval Jewish commentators, to good effect. When he quotes one of these in Latin, he gives a translation. How refreshing to read something that recognizes that good exegesis does not start *de novo*, but needs to be part of an ongoing conversation. The indices of Bible ref-

erences and authors cited round out the book's usefulness.

Ortlund writes good clean prose so the book reads well. His personal spiritual commitment and his passion for the holiness of the church come through in his exposition, and move the reader to do more than acknowledge the truth. I recommend this study to all who wish to be theologically astute and biblically informed, and not just to scholars. May Ortlund's earnest wish be fulfilled: "May this book challenge the covenant community of today to think more clearly, to love more deeply and to reform more boldly, to the greater glory of God and to their own richer happiness" (p. 11).

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FIRE IN THE THATCH

Eifon Evans

Bryntirion, Bridgend, Wales: Evangelical Press of Wales
(1996).

234 pages, paper, \$13.99.

Eifon Evans is well established in the field of revival literature. He is particularly known for his emphasis on revival in his native country, Wales. Previous publications include the following: *The Welsh Revival of 1904*, *Revival Comes to Wales*, and *The Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales*, and articles on revival in several periodicals, including *Reformation & Revival Journal*.

Evans has collected several articles which have been published previously, adding five unpublished articles. There are three articles among the fifteen that are more general, titled "What Is Revival?" and "Why No Revival?" (which commence and end the studies), and "Revivals: Their Rise, Progress and Achievements." All the articles

except the one on Richard Baxter of Kidderminster have their principle context in Wales. The title has its origin in a statement of the Welsh Puritan, Walter Craddock, concerning the spread of the gospel: ". . . the gospel has run over the mountains between Breconshire and Monmouthshire, as the fire in the thatch."¹

The author provides an inviting cache of biographical material on Welsh leaders such as Daniel Rowland, Howell Harris, Griffith Jones, David Jones, John Davies, Humphrey Jones, Thomas Charles of Bala, William Williams, and David Morgan, etc. He also shows George Whitefield's connection with the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.

In one of the beginning chapters previously mentioned ("The Rise, Progress and Achievements of Revival") Evans gives to the uninitiated as fine an overview of the eighteenth-century awakening in the United Kingdom and America as can be provided in reduced compass. His progression includes sections on (1) Darkness Before Dawn, (2) The Dawn of Revivals, (3) The Progress of Revivals, and (4) The Fruits of Revival. What is most refreshing is the considerable highlighting of doctrine and preaching.

Illustrative of Evans biographical depictions is the chapter on "Humphrey Jones, the Youngster Who Lit the Fuse." Born in Wales, Jones had moved to the United States, preaching in the Welsh communities for three years. During his time there he experienced the 1858 Revival which swept the United States. He was heavily influenced by Charles Grandison Finney. A brief biographical sketch of Finney is inserted to explain the underpinnings to the type of revival expectations and methodology used by Jones. He returned to Wales "to set Wales ablaze."²

His ministry, mainly among the Welsh Wesleyan Methodists, was well received by many, though quite unusual in style for the larger Welsh mindset. But this changed. Before long Jones lost effectiveness. He resorted

to prophecy. He once stated that he had a message from the Lord that "the dawn is about to break . . . that on a certain day, at eleven in the morning, the Holy Spirit would descend visibly, and the Millennium would then be ushered in."³ This linking of revival to millennial hopes was akin to Finney. Finney had said, "If the church will do all her duty, the millennium may come in this country in three years."⁴ But Jones' prophecy was not fulfilled, and he virtually disappeared from any type of leadership in the revival. The work continued, however, being a genuine visitation from God, through the more sane David Morgan and others. The 1859 Revival as it touched Wales was greatly used of God, even though the influences in its inception were problematic. Over 100,000 people were converted, most of whom persevered.⁵

I had been curious for some time concerning the methods of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists on accessing members into the church. This book answered my questions. I had run across a footnote to this article in another publication recently and had intended to write Evans for information concerning it. The rules and serious questions which new converts went through prompted me to weigh our own church's procedures. The *seiat*, or society, even examined the convert by interviewing his neighbors to find out if there had been genuine change. I found the process to be far more spiritual and far less mechanical than ours. Though not a perfect fit to our day, we would do well to examine our procedures in the light of their approach. Some of the retention of converts, even in the revivals which were not as Word-based (the '04), could be attributed to a more thorough system of accessing members than most evangelicals implement today.

One can find a great deal of material related to the interplay of emotions and truth in revival from Evans. The man, Griffith Jones, who was so used in the early days of

the evangelical revival in Wales overrode emotional excess in revival on several occasions. His actions incited some discussion between revival leaders as to the place of emotions in revival. On October 13, 1745, the following was recorded by Howell Harris:

He was offended with the screaming and crying out under the Word. I [Howell Harris] said that I heard Mr. Rowland reproving [those] as cried [out of] themselves, but that many I believe could not help it, and that I had rather see them cry than gape He said we were charged as going to Quakerism and all errors, and to leave the Bible and to follow our experiences. I said that was not true, but what is the Bible but a dead letter to us till we do experience the work of the Spirit in us, not one of the other separately, but both together.⁶

This kind of discussion among revival leaders helps me see the always-present nature of this "feelings" issue. The Society meetings and the tone of the Evangelical Awakening in general was one which, in the final place, put the Word above emotions, making the feelings "the handmaid of truth." But preaching that does not include the emotions is not revival preaching. As Derek Llwyd Morgan states: "It was unusual preaching, rather than ordinary reading, that converted people" during the Great Awakening."⁷

In 1819, revival leader John Elias wrote:

True religion does not consist in emotions. The passions of many are excited under sermons, without a change of heart! Others may be changed; their hearts broken, conscience tender, sin hated, self loathed, but perhaps without many tears. There is a great difference in the natural temperament of people, which accounts for the difference in their feelings under the Word preached. I confess that if people are easily

moved under natural causes, but immovable and unaffected under sermons, it is a very bad sign. . . .⁸

One additional reinforcement of a doctrinal issue was important to me, filling in some of the data that I need to buttress my point. I have repeatedly seen that regeneration plays heavily in many revivals, particularly those that were pre-Finney. Evans deals with this in relationship to the Evangelical Awakening by giving some interesting details of such preaching, not only in Whitefield, who was well-known for his new birth emphasis (Whitefield referred to regeneration at least forty-six times in his journals between 1734 and 1744; justification, eight times), but in his contemporaries also. William McCullough had been laboring on regeneration about a year before revival came in Cambuslang; the same was true of James Robe in Kilsyth and Daniel Rowland in Llangeitho. We have been saying and will say many times again that justification and regeneration are not preached as much nor as thoroughly nor in as lively a manner in our needy day.

It is impossible to comment on each article, each of which is a stand-alone piece. However, I do wish to stress again the benefit I received by reviewing the Welsh revival situation in this fashion. I have always appreciated Eifon Evans's work. There is a distinct difference between the way an outsider treats Welsh revivals and the way an insider treats them. Evans is no romantic and often finds fault with certain aspects of the Welsh historical situations, but few will understand it as well as he.

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Notes

1. Eifon Evans, *Fire in the Thatch* (Bryntirion, Bridgend, Wales: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1996), 10.

2. *Ibid.*, 187.
3. *Ibid.*, 200. Quoted in J. J. Morgan, *Hanes Dafydd Morgan Ysbyty a Diwygiad* 59 (Mold, 1906), 146-47.
4. *Ibid.*, 201.
5. *Ibid.*, 202. See e.g., *Yr Eurgrawn Wesleyaidd*, Dec. 1860, 429; *Cymru*, vol. xiii (1897), 13; Thomas Phillips, *op. cit.*, 135-36; Hugh Jones, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, 987.
6. *Ibid.*, Quoted in Tom Benyon, *Howell Harris's Visits to Pembrokeshire*, 1966, 5:118-19.
7. *Ibid.*, 158. Quoted in *Y Diwygiad Mawr*, 1981, 39, 38, quoting from *Ymddiddanion cyfeillgar rhwng Gwr or Eglwys Loegr, as Ymneillduwr neu Un o'r Grefydd Newydd a elwir Methodistiaid* [7].
8. *Ibid.*, 185.

THE LOVE OF GOD HE WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO MAKE US HOLY

John MacArthur, Jr.

Dallas, Texas: Word, 1996.

251 pages, cloth, \$19.99.

Christ came not to possess our brains with some cold opinions, that send down a freezing and benumbing influence into our hearts. Christ was a master of the life, not of the school; and he is the best Christian whose heart beats with the purest pulse towards heaven, not he whose head spins the finest cobweb.

Ralph Cudworth

God is Love. Surely these are the warmest, most hope-filled words in all of the world, but also the most misunderstood. John MacArthur's design in *The Love of God* is not to spin theological cobwebs, but to present God's love in such a fashion that the splendor of it will fill your heart. Along the way, he also does a fine job of dismantling many wrongheaded views of this wonderful truth. He shows how those on both sides of the aisle (Reformed and Arminian) have misunderstood and misapplied God's love, from Pink to Finney.

An essential question is, "Does God love everyone, even those destined for hell?" Arminians are quick to answer yes, and some in the Reformed camp have given a firm no. MacArthur shows us that the biblical position is that God has two loves, or that there are two aspects of His love (p. 95). He has a general love for all of creation, including elect and non-elect. This is His general benevolence (common grace), that allows Him to show love or kindness to His enemies. However, this is distinct in Scripture from God's particular or electing love that He has for His own children. This is the kind of love that will cause God to do whatever it takes to make you holy—from predestination, to effectual calling, to justification, to sanctification, to glorification.

MacArthur's goal, however, is not to simply answer this theological question, but to also lead us to the practical implications of this truth for evangelism and for our security as believers in Christ. To the latter he gives us a good look at Romans chapter eight. Regarding evangelism, he shows us the biblical truth that we can and must freely offer the gospel to all men and invite all men to trust Christ, even though not all who hear this offer are among the elect.

He does provide a good discussion regarding to the sincerity of the free offer of the gospel to the non-elect (p. 107). I would have liked more discussion given to the truth that God's saving offers to the nonelect are evidence of His loving character to sinners—and how it highlights in a wonderful way the sovereignty of His grace. It displays well that no amount of pleading, offering or kindness, even by God, will change a rebel heart. The sinful heart must be changed by sovereign grace.

There is also a sense in which God *does* take pleasure in the death of the wicked that needs to be addressed (Deut. 28:63; 1 Sam. 2:25). In addition, I differ with some state-

ments regarding the priority of love as the *sine qua non* of God. Scripture exalts the holiness of God as such. It is not so much that God possesses a *loving* holiness (p. 29), but rather a holy love—a love that is pure and undefiled, and completely unlike anything wise in all creation (God loves His enemies!). It is holiness, more than love, that pervades all that God is. These are minor points and this is a fine book to be read and passed around.

The end of the book contains four wonderful sermons by Reformed men from the past who have walked the old paths on this issue. These four messages bring to life many of the truths MacArthur has unpacked for us in the body of the book. One titled, "Fury Not In God," by Thomas Chalmers is a great example of earnest pleading with sinners to repent and flee to Christ, that will surely stir the heart and refresh our tired and weak offers of the gospel. I would add to this list Thomas Watson's study titled, *All Things For Good* (Banner of Truth Trust) on Romans 8:28, as a divine cordial to cheer the heart of the saint with God's love.

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THE WORSHIP OF THE ENGLISH PURITANS

Horton Davies

Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria (1997).

304 pages, paper, \$15.95.

Sometimes judging a book by its cover is possible. In this case, a dramatic scene of Puritans in a Pilgrim-like new world arrival clothes the brilliant republication of Horton Davies' 1948 book, *The Worship of the English Puritans*. What is inside the cover will not disappoint Reformation-conscious evangelicals. Davies' book, based on his 1944

Oxford dissertation, is frequently referenced in serious worship literature, but has been out of reach for most of us until now. As the author notes, the book was reissued forty-one years after his faculty appointment as professor of religion at Princeton University. A veritable patriarch of liturgical scholarship, Davies has made a grand contribution to worship studies, not only in the present work, but also in the five-volume *magnum opus*, *Worship and Theology in England* (Princeton University Press, 1965-75). Hence Soli Deo Gloria Publications has again made an important resource available, though coming from SDG one may be surprised to see in the preface approving references to the ecumenical movement and Karl Barth.

This aside, the value of the book is that it exegetes Puritan worship sentiments with frequent primary source references (with their original spellings, no less) on all the important topics of worship. Davies' purpose is more than historical, however; it is practical. "It is an attempt to shew the relevance of the Reformed tradition in Christians' worship today, and to reawaken the interest of members of the Reformed Churches in Great Britain in their own rich liturgical inheritance" (vii). Davies is at his best in weaving a myriad of heretofore unknown primary references into a tapestry portraying Puritanism in the pew. Among the author's insights, he observes that though the practice of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists diverged, they were nonetheless quite united in their overall approach to worship, namely that "The Word of God [is] the Supreme Liturgical Criterion" (the title of chapter five, p. 49). The streams flowing from the Reformation did not all follow the same path, but the fountainheads of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura* guided the reformation of worship among all Protestants.

A survey of the contents show chapters on the nature, theology, and heritage of the Puritans with important con-

sideration given to their relationship with the continental Reformers. An important current running through the book is the development of the Puritanism beyond the first-generation Reformers like Calvin, as well as the advances (?) of the Puritans regarding the purity of worship. "Puritanism, as we have seen was born in Geneva, but it was christened in England" (p. 49). Very specifically, the *Book of Common Prayer*, extemporaneous prayer, praise, preaching, the sacraments, ordinations, and church discipline are examined. The cost of the book is hardly to be compared with the value of the last chapter, surveying and critiquing Puritan worship. In fact, I would have purchased the appendices alone if they were available. Appendix A compares the liturgies of Calvin, Knox, two *Books of Common Prayer*, the *Westminster Directory*, *Baxter's Reformation of Liturgy*, and the *Savoy Liturgy* in a helpful table. The other appendices are also jewels—a brief essay on art and music, a short discussion of the Puritans' attitude toward creeds, and finally, a look at Puritan family worship with special attention to Richard Baxter.

The historical value of the book notwithstanding, one may be surprised to learn of many Puritans' stark attitudes on a few matters: no ring in marriage, no religious ceremony at a wedding, no religious ceremony at a funeral, public prayer only in a standing posture, and certainly no acknowledgment of holidays other than the Lord's Day (the "Christian Sabbath"), not to mention the more commonly known denials of instrumental music and hymns (of "human composition" or exclusive Psalm-singing) in worship. Even if at the end of the day one comes to different conclusions about all of the above matters, it is hardly worthless to examine our sometimes grim elder brothers' narrow disposition on these practices. After all, they were seeking to be men of the Word. For this, if nothing else, the book is recommended by this reviewer. It is a resource for

those interested in Reformation studies. It is a challenge for those seeking to refine current worship practices. It is eye-opening to those who comfortably label themselves "Reformed"—if they only parrot the current trends of evangelicalism.

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