



*Reformation*  
**REVIVAL**  
*JOURNAL*

CHRISTIAN  
ONENESS

*A Quarterly for Church Leadership*

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VOLUME 13 · NUMBER 1 · WINTER 2004

## *BOOK REVIEWS*

### *TWELVE DYNAMIC SHIFTS FOR TRANSFORMING YOUR CHURCH*

E. Stanley Ott

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans (2002)

113 pages, paper, \$13.00

Stan Ott, as a Presbyterian pastor and president of the Vital Churches Institute, has given us many good books about Church revitalization. This is another study that encourages the local congregation to think constructively about how to move beyond a "traditional" church that focuses on pastor and programs to a "transformational" one that focuses on spiritual vitality and growth. In transitioning to transformational congregations, the key theme throughout the book is to bless what a church has done well and add what a church needs to be better. This is not only wise but effective advice for bringing about change in the Church.

Ott's starting point is that the crisis in the mainline Church today is due to loss of personal spirituality and congregational vitality. For this reason, he leads us through a series of twelve shifts that need to happen in visioning, ministry, congregational programs, and practice of leadership to address these shortfalls. He also provides very practical exercises for implementing these shifts. His goal is the transformational Church which he defines as a church that shares pastoral leadership, employs a variety of worship styles, is communal and missional in emphasis, is high-commitment, embraces ministry as a lifestyle and whose governance is permission-giving and leads by ministry teams. These churches (of any size) allow congregations to grow spiritually and to see themselves as "sent, in all humility, by God to pursue the work of Jesus Christ in the world" (7). This, he claims, with prayerful and expectant trust in the work of the Holy Spirit,

will renew and restore a local congregation to active and vital discipleship and ministry within the Church and the community. I cannot agree more! If the call to making faithful disciples to carry on God's mission in the world is still the *raison d'être* of the Church, then Ott's recommendations for becoming a transformational church could not be more helpful and timely.

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*SACRED THIRST: MEETING GOD IN THE DESERT  
OF OUR LONGINGS*

M. Craig Barnes  
Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2001)  
224 pages, cloth, \$16.99

At the time I was reading Craig Barnes' *Sacred Thirst*, country and western star Willie Nelson came to town and performed in concert. The "thirst" of the sell-out crowd was obvious. They came to the stage as if it were a make-shift altar and laid flowers, hats, and bandanas before Willie's microphone. Alcoholic libations were consumed by many. People in wheelchairs and on crutches came forward as did hundreds of others to receive a blessing. Often, Willie did raise his hand or give a nod, or throw a hat to the crowd. He threw several of those, and they became viciously-contested relics. The local newspaper reported the following day, a Sunday: "the audience seemed content to just be in the master's presence" (*The Telegraph Herald*, front page, August 24, 2003).

Craig Barnes' thesis is just this: we thirst. We thirst for sacred filling because we are dehydrated and need "living water." Barnes uses the John 4 text of the Samaritan woman at the well as his biblical centerpiece. Barnes returns in each chapter to this transformative encounter between Jesus, the

true master, and the thirsty woman from Samaria.

Active Christians and Church leaders are all aware that only Jesus himself can offer living water to quench our soul's thirst. We know that our best efforts, our favorite relationships, our leisure pursuits will never satisfy our deepest cravings. Please don't misunderstand my portrayal of the Willie Nelson concert, for it was a fine performance. Yet no famous musician can offer his or her followers what Jesus as Messiah offers at the well of our sacred longing.

Barnes elucidates this reality through unique perspectives. For example, he reiterates the biblical truth: our job as Christians is not to provide living water, but "to be a guide in the desert" (85). Church business and busyness can consume us and become an addiction "to mask our longing for something more, for something sacred, for something we fear deep down may not really exist at all" (74). No one finds the living water by "climbing up" the spiritual ladder through the use of disciplines like prayer, worship, Bible study, mission or community (139). Barnes reminds us: "The challenge of life is not to do less, but to see the risen Christ at work in every aspect of life" (69). This includes the people who are "working against us on all the important moral issues" (32). God is there for them also, to offer them the living water of himself. "Until we see God from the perspective of our enemies, we will never have seen enough of him" (32). As a Protestant nun once reminded me, Christ died for them [my adversaries] too. Barnes presents Christ as head of a dysfunctional family; we are gathered around a table, the Lord's Table. "Because Jesus Christ is the head of every community that gathers in his name, the dynamic of the family is not abandoned to the dysfunctions of the brothers and sisters but is determined by the Head of the family" (159).

Barnes' style is both didactic and narrative. Barnes, who is currently the Meneilly Professor of Leadership and Ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PCUSA), draws from years of parish experience. From time to time, he reveals the legacy he received from his lovingly devout Christian parents. These glimpses inspired me as a parent. However, the greatest ser-

vice offered in reading *Sacred Thirst* is rest, relaxation and restored perspective. Through pastoral examples coupled with exegesis, we are invited to examine the cistern of Samaria from numerous directions and to imbibe the Living Water.

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### THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION

Paul F. Bradshaw, M. E. Johnson, and L. E. Phillips,  
Minneapolis: Fortress Press (2001)  
247 pages, paper, \$47.00.

This recent work, led by Dr. Paul F. Bradshaw of the University of Notre Dame, is, in a sense, a climax to more than twenty years of Bradshaw's published works on the subject of liturgy. The volume is included in the commentary series, *Hermeneia*, and is edited by Harold Attridge of Yale University.

The early Church document, *The Apostolic Tradition*, first came to light as a complete text in 1848. By the twentieth century it became an object of intense interest to scholars of biblical and early Church history. Traditionally ascribed to Hippolytus of Rome, and dated around A.D. 215, *The Apostolic Tradition* ranks as the earliest written record of Christian liturgy that we now possess. This generally accepted view has been challenged in this commentary, as its preface attests:

Instead, we believe that it is a composite document made up of a number of layers and strands of diverse provenance and compiled over a period of time, and therefore not representing the practice of any one Christian community (xi).

In the introduction (1-18), much use is made of lower/literary criticism in analyzing the text of the document. While only a few fragments of the original Greek text remain, the main translations are found in Latin, Sahidic, Arabic, Ethiopic

and Bohairic manuscripts, along with versions in other church orders—Apostolic Constitutions (fourth century), Canons of Hippolytus (fourth or fifth centuries), and the *Testamentum Domini* (fourth or fifth century).

In concluding their discussion, the authors affirm the belief that the original core of the document had three parts:

(1) Directives about appointment to ministry, beginning with the ordination of a bishop and concluding with those with gifts of healing (2:1-4; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1-2 [?]; 10:1-3; 11; 12; 13; 14).

(2) Directives about the initiation of new converts, including who is eligible for reception, and instructions for those selected for baptism and eventual admission to the Eucharist (15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21:1-5, 12-18, 20, 25-26; and possibly parts of 21:27-28, 31-32, 34, 37-38).

(3) Directives about community meals and prayer, with very detailed instructions about when and what to eat, and when and how to pray (23; 24 [=29B]; 25 [29C]; 26 [?]; 27; 28:4-6; 29A; 30A; 31; 32; 33; 35).

The printing of the text of this document, along with various comments on the text, occupies pages 20-224. There are seven (or sometimes fewer) columns on facing pages where the extant texts are printed (Latin, Sahidic, Arabic and Ethiopic, together with the Apostolic Constitutions, the Canons of Hippolytus, and the *Testamentum Domini*).

In each chapter unit the texts are followed by textual comments and exegetical observations on problematic questions or issues in the texts.

Regarding liturgical matters themselves, the main areas of interest and concern in the document seem to be ordination of bishops, priests and deacons, candidacy for baptism and consequent inclusion in the congregation for Eucharistic celebration, a Eucharistic prayer, the times and procedures for prayer (common and personal). Great emphasis is also laid upon regulating the life and liturgical practice of believers, and less on the moral attributes and qualifications of leaders and people. This signals a change from earlier Christian literature, such as the New Testament epistles, 1 Clement, and the *Didache*.

This document is of great historical and theological interest because of its seemingly great antiquity, the effect it has had upon later documents, and its input in the present upon liturgical texts and practices. Such impact may be seen in Roman Catholic and Anglican reforms in current liturgical directives, to name only two.

While many questions remain, and some disputation of the approach taken to the history of the text (questions of authorship, date, provenance, and the text of the document itself), both authors, editor and publisher are to be afforded sincere thanks for such a helpful, stimulating and important volume. Both academics and clergy should give careful attention to its reading and application.

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***WORLD ON FIRE: HOW EXPORTING FREE MARKET  
DEMOCRACY BREEDS ETHNIC HATRED AND GLOBAL  
INSTABILITY***

Amy Chua

New York: Doubleday (2003)

340 pages, cloth, \$26.00

Amy Chua, a professor at Yale Law School, has written a profound book, in understandable prose, that makes a clear and compelling case against exporting our ideals of Western democracy joined with free market capitalism. She meticulously documents how opening global markets often stirs ethnic conflict and backlash that worsens when democracy is added to the mixture. As odd as this sounds to American idealists, the facts she presents are extremely impressive. When Thomas Sowell of the Hoover Institution, and Strobe Talbott of the Brookings Institution, who represent the right and left of the political spectrum respectively, both commend a book it is calculated to get your attention. Such is the case with *World On Fire*. The reader will not be disappointed.

Chua examines the actual impact of economic globaliza-

tion in every region of the world, from Africa and Asia to Russia and Latin America. She demonstrates that in almost every case poorer nations are economically controlled by a handful of people who most typically are an ethnic minority within that particular nation. For example, it is the Chinese, a very small minority of the population, who control the economy of Southeast Asia. It is the white minority that controls most of the wealth in Latin America and South Africa, while in post-Communist Russia the majority of the wealth is in the hands of seven Jewish men. In West Africa a tiny Lebanese population controls the wealth of the nations while in East Africa it is Asian Indians who lead the way. What makes this problematic is that in each case the poorest people, who are the overwhelming majority of the population, are left out while a despised minority grows richer the more globalism spreads. Chua sees in this scenario the makings of revolutions and uprisings in the coming decades unless change is implemented sooner than later.

When democracy is added to this international equation a volatile mix is often the result. This mix has unleashed suppressed ethnic hatred and brought to power ethno-nationalist governments that confiscate property from the wealthy and seek revenge through violence. This, Chua argues, is what produced criminal leaders like Milosevic in Serbia and Mugabe in Zimbabwe. It also produced the uprisings in Rwanda that led to massive slaughter.

Chua adeptly argues that a great deal of the anti-Americanism that exists in the poorer two-thirds of the world is the result of our being the market-dominant minority that enjoys wealth and economic power in a way that is much greater than our numbers. Combine our wealth and power with the images television gives to the world of our values and opulence and you get the makings of a massive reaction.

Challenging traditional American Cold War thinking about instability in various nations, Chua concludes:

Throughout the twentieth century, bursts of nationalization repeatedly punctuated and damaged the economic growth of

Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Most American economists and policymakers, steeped in decades of Cold War dynamic, tend to assume that all these nationalizations were motivated by socialist or Communist thinking. In fact, however, nationalization in the Third World has always been far less an expression of Communism than of popular frustration and vengeance directed at a market-dominant minority (132).

She argues, with the clearest evidence to support her case, that "nationalization movements in the developing world have been fueled by popular resentment among abjectly poor majorities against market-dominant minorities" (135). When "almost everywhere market-dominant minorities exist, post-1989 democratization has generated a volatile combination of anti-market sentiment and ethnic scapegoating" (135). As a result, when markets triumphed in the world in the 1990s a backlash followed.

Chua is not an anti-globalist, nor is she opposed to expanding markets into poorer countries. What she opposes is unrestrained democracy mixed with raw capitalism in a cultural and social setting that is simply not ready to handle the changes required to make the system work successfully. What she brilliantly challenges is the naive notion that what works in the West will work in every other culture so long as we apply the principles correctly and consistently. The way we presently export our idea of democracy, which is really not pure democracy at all, translates into chaos in many places where ethnic conflict lies beneath the surface. She provides some interesting ideas about how to improve the situation, but concludes by appealing to the rich to voluntarily demonstrate generosity in ways that will show their interest in the overall well-being of the nation in which they live. One could say she makes an appeal for compassionate conservatism in a Third World context that begins with how America seeks to extend its cherished ideals to the people of the earth. One can hope that those who influence our government and its international policies will carefully read this work.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG  
Editor-in-Chief

*THE REAL LINCOLN: A NEW LOOK AT ABRAHAM LINCOLN, HIS AGENDA, AND AN UNNECESSARY WAR*

Thomas J. DiLorenzo

Prima Publishing: Roseville, California (2002)

333 pages, cloth, \$24.95

The myths that surround Abraham Lincoln, our best-known president, abound to this day. Most Americans know little or nothing about the issues that surrounded Abraham Lincoln's life and presidency. The assumptions they were given in school were often apocryphal.

Let me provide a few examples. Lincoln, we were all taught, was the "Great Emancipator" of the slaves. Wrong! He actually opposed abolition as part of his platform for office in 1860, and the Emancipation Proclamation was a political document that really freed no one. What about Abraham Lincoln and the Union? Didn't he save the Constitution, and in turn, the nation, from a division that would have destroyed our real freedoms? Wrong again. Even New York City, and before that states in New England, considered secession, and most people in Lincoln's time were agreed that secession was not only allowed by the Constitution but was a right granted to the states when they formed the federal government. The list goes on.

Professor DiLorenzo not only wants to correct the "Lincoln myth," but he wants to show that the cause for which he fought the Civil War in reality destroyed a better way of life that we would have preserved had Lincoln not been successful.

Some of the highlights, or lowlights as the case may be, that DiLorenzo cites in Lincoln's administration include the myth that secession was an act of "treason." (The author shows, and I believe correctly, that it was not.) DiLorenzo even goes so far as to suggest that Lincoln governed as a "dictator." (Moderns who charge George W. Bush with overreaching in his use of power to make war should consider Abraham Lincoln!) In addition, Lincoln tolerated, indeed DiLorenzo says directed, "war on civilians," thus demonstrating that he did not believe in the very old idea of "just war." There is plenty here to fire the passions of those committed to the cause of

the old Confederacy. There is also plenty here to make one suspicious that the author overextends his argument in certain places. I noted a few in my margins and did not go to the trouble to check his sources at every point.

DiLorenzo, who is a professor of economics at Loyola College in Maryland, is particularly keen on demonstrating that Lincoln's economic legacy was his worst contribution to American history. DiLorenzo builds his case on the obvious—Lincoln was deeply committed to the policies of Henry Clay, the great Whig politician. He embraced the Hamiltonian view of centralized federal government as opposed to the Jeffersonian. The result of this political direction is that the United States moved from a federation or confederacy of several states to a union of all in one large and centralized government based in Washington. DiLorenzo firmly believes the liberties intended in the Constitution were thereby lost in the 1860s. Most historians would agree with some or all of these conclusions. What becomes more controversial is the author's thesis that Lincoln was a raving pragmatist, if not a deceptive politician of the sort rarely seen in the White House. There is enough here to offend everyone except a deeply devoted Southern sympathizer who still believes that Abraham Lincoln brought on the Civil War and that if anyone else had been elected in 1860, war would have been avoided.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG  
Editor-in-Chief

*GEORGE AND LAURA: PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE*

Christopher Andersen  
New York: HarperCollins (2002)  
307 pages, cloth, \$25.95

Marriages of the rich and famous are notoriously interesting but often troubled. The twenty-five year marriage of President George W. and Laura Bush is an extremely interesting human story, but their marriage is most definitely not trou-

bled. This is a healthy marriage, indeed one worthy of more careful reflection in an age when marriages routinely fail. Anderson's account serves as a biography of the President and First Lady, and as an account of how George and Laura support one another in times of trial and joy. The story is really not that remarkable, yet what makes it all the more remarkable is that neither one aspired to the positions they now hold until about ten years ago. (What a refreshing difference from the previous president who desired the office passionately for most of his lifetime!) Laura, if truth be known, never aspired to be the First Lady, yet she has seized the opportunity with courage and conviction. It is accurate to say that these two people are comfortable with themselves, share the joy of life, and take their work seriously and themselves not so seriously.

George Bush, who was notoriously a hard-drinking, playboy-womanizer and comedian during his college days, clearly had no real sense of direction in life until he met Laura Lane Welch in 1977. Laura, who was a serious teacher and an only child, clearly lacked a spark and zest for life until she met her one true love in George. The impact of the one on the other resulted in a marriage that makes for an emotionally stable couple who are at peace with themselves in every way. George is the extrovert, happy-go-lucky, emotionally-sensitive man (a rare combination), while Laura is the reflective introvert who loves to read and who understands her husband's great strengths and protects him religiously. She is able to draw out his best instincts in service to the nation.

Everyone knows George W. had a drinking problem. How bad was it? What prompted his change and how did he stop drinking? Was his conversion as dramatic as is sometimes portrayed? What is his relationship with the Christian Right and where and how did it begin? How did teenage tragedy shape Laura's life forever and how did the death of George's little sister shape his life from early childhood? These and numerous related questions are sensitively answered by Andersen's well-written portrait.

This marriage is a unique partnership of the most intimate and courageous sort. It is a story of triumph and tragedy,

the tale of two people truly in love whose lives are inspiring in many ways. I think one of the best insights Andersen makes is the impact Laura has upon George when he enters a room. His whole demeanor and appearance is steadied and strengthened by her very presence. If you want a glimpse into the working of an interesting and loving couple this is a good read.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG  
Editor-in-Chief

### REDEEMING THE ROUTINES: BRINGING THEOLOGY TO LIFE

Robert Banks

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (2003)

187 pages, paper, \$16.99

“Interesting approach,” mused one reader. Here is more than a mere Christian living book. It is a “Baker Academic.” This is an intellectual challenge to bring theology out into the streets for credibility and everyday practice. The “Questions for Reflection” at the end of each chapter cause the reader to think and reflect on the provocative logic of the author. It may be useful in the seminaries to enable pastors to involve laity in a theology that matters where we live and move and have are very being. In this way it serves as an introduction to “everyday theology” versus an introduction to systematic or exegetical theology commonly used in academic settings.

It is reformational, but not in the way one might suppose. The author, Robert Banks, is influenced by a variety of influential people—an ordained Presbyterian writer, a Quaker educator, and a Roman Catholic priest in a religious order (32-35).<sup>1</sup> Banks agrees with Cyril Eastwood that the priesthood of believers was only partially realized since the Reformation (25). His purpose is to make theology relevant (35), but has realistic expectations set forth for what the book may offer (37). Banks gives helpful quotations from Jacques Ellul’s, *The Presence of the Kingdom* when getting to the heart of

his book—to realize the difference theology should be making in the lives of people (37-38, 93-94). Banks wants to see theology move from the professional to the contextual, local, personal, ethical, indigenous, practical theologies that both *lay theology* and *liberation theology* movements provoked. In this sense it is a Reformation-driven book, but the theology of the Reformers only plays a part.

This reviewer remembered David Wells urgent appeal for theology to move from the ivory tower learned guild to the local churches.<sup>2</sup> Banks first wrote this book the same year and records in ten theses what he saw as “the credibility gap” between belief and daily life in chapter two. I sensed Banks’ best chapter was chapter three, “The Texture of Daily Life.” In this chapter the reader sees how the everyday life of Americans and the West is void of theological redemption. The chapter ends with “the most trenchant plea for every aspect of our lives to be drawn into a Christian pattern of understanding” from Jacques Ellul (93-94). “It is evident,” wrote Ellul, “that the first thing to do is to be faithful to revelation, but this fidelity can only become a reality in daily life through the creation of a new way of life: this is the ‘missing link’” (93). How is this to be brought about? Banks has some practical ways of doing theology for the reader.

Banks presents some helpful ways to realize theology in everyday life. He defines and explains his house church called *Focus* (100-03), the role model of apprenticeship and discipleship (104-07), task force membership (107-09), workshops (110-14), and study groups (114-18). This chapter ends with a needed clarification that shares how Banks sees “formal learning” fitting in (118-22). The main contents conclude with chapter five, “A People’s Theology.” Instead of an anti-intellectualism in the already much criticized democratization of American Christianity,<sup>3</sup> Banks puts a different spin on “a people’s theology.” In a way, Banks has a democratized theology because he draws on all kinds of theological traditions that have offered information for the sake of transformation. Against the “casuistic” emphasis, Banks suggests a holistic approach (135-37). He welcomes a narrative, “down-to-earth”



spirituality. Banks takes the Protestants' doctrine of vocation, the Roman emphasis on incarnation, and the South American emphasis on liberation to emphasize their strengths melded together in developing a theology of everyday life under the doctrines of creation and providence (140-41). "Democratizing theology," writes Banks, "so that it becomes the providence of a larger population of Christians who are prepared to think about their faith in a coherent way" is a key way to re-image a truly helpful theologian for the "routines" of life (148).

In the end, I was left in agreement with the central purpose to bring theology in a reformational manner to everyday living. However, I was concerned with the influence and promotion of liberation, Roman Catholic, and liberal theologians.

Concerning liberation theology, Banks only emphasizes its grass roots nature (49), the possibility of change in social, political, and economic structures (141), and its ability to tackle concrete problems (167-68). All this sounds great, but the hermeneutical issues between these various theological disciplines and traditions are greater. In an age of specialization, it is good to be reminded of a people's reformation movement motivated by theology applied to the routines of everyday life.

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1. Frederick Buechner, Parker Palmer, and Charles Cummings.
2. David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).
3. Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies and Fat Minds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994).

### *THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS*

Peter T. O'Brien

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans (1999)

536 pages, cloth, \$28.00

A fact of great encouragement in recent days has been the renewed interest among Evangelicals in producing substantial commentaries on the various books of the Old and New Testaments. The Pillar New Testament Commentary series, under the direction of D. A. Carson, is among the best of these current series. And this volume by a renowned Australian Evangelical is a superb addition to this series.

O'Brien takes a conservative position with regard to the authorship of this letter, which he notes was John Calvin's favorite among the Pauline corpus. His argument for it being a genuinely Pauline letter is solid, utterly convincing, and argued at some length (4-47). The commentary that follows is extensive and based on the Greek text, though the NIV is used throughout as the preferred translation.

What is most heartening is that O'Brien is prepared to indicate how the text impinges on present issues. For example, commenting on the household table that relates to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:22-33, he rightly remarks:

[T]heologically, we are not free to retain a supposedly exalted view of Christian marriage with its loving service, commitment, trust, and growth, on the one hand, and to jettison hierarchical patterns of submission or subordination, on the other, because they are expressions of an outmoded first-century world-view that are unacceptable in our contemporary situation (408).

In sum, this is an excellent commentary that is faithful to the biblical text and applies it judiciously to our world. Highly recommended.

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**BILL CLINTON: AN AMERICAN JOURNEY**

Nigel Hamilton

New York; Random House (2003)

784 pages, cloth, \$29.95

On several occasions, over the past ten years, I have argued that former president Bill Clinton is the quintessential modern evangelical. I did this in reviewing *The Clinton Enigma* (1998), as well as *First in His Class* (1995), both written by the award-winning journalist and biographer, David Maraniss. I also wrote an opinion piece, three-plus years ago, which argued that President Clinton's appearance on the platform of the Willow Creek leadership conference, in the summer of 2000, again demonstrated my point. Not only does Bill Clinton profess an evangelical conversion experience, and an active faith in Christ, but he is a member of an influential Southern Baptist Church in Little Rock and seeks the counsel of well-known Evangelicals like Tony Campolo, Gordon MacDonald and Bill Hybels. He is clearly quite able to exegete the cultural experience of evangelical Christianity. Like it or not, this man is the product of our system and *our* particular sub-culture.

This new biography, which covers Clinton's life until his election to the presidency in November of 1992, does nothing to dissuade my opinion about Clinton the Evangelical. The author of this massive tome, Nigel Hamilton, is the John F. Kennedy scholar and visiting professor in the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs, the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He is also the author of *Monty*, the three-volume official biography of Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, and of the best-seller, *JFK: Reckless Youth*. This present work is hard-hitting, objective and quite well documented. It is also a book that I feel certain Bill Clinton would not wish to have read by those who will seek to understand his presidency.

The details of Clinton's difficult and sad childhood are well told. The influence of his grandmother and mother is overbearing and painful. His father, William Jefferson Blythe, died three months before he was born, assuming that his

paternity is as has been assumed over the years. (Hamilton, and even Clinton himself, have their doubts.) Later his mother, Virginia, would marry the hard-living, hard-drinking, gambler, Roger Clinton. Bill would legally change his name, seemingly to assure his mother that he could care for her during the period of Virginia's divorce from Clinton. His half-brother, Roger, would become Bill's concern for many years. Bill soon adopted roles that looked more like those of a father than an older brother. Tragically, Roger would end up a drug addict and in prison.

What will interest Christian readers, in particular, is Clinton's religious background. Growing up in the tiny little town of Hope, Arkansas, the Clinton family later moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas, the Las Vegas of the South. As a boy of eight "little Billy" would walk to Sunday school and worship at the First Baptist Church of Hope. With neither parent supporting him in this direction he went alone, carrying his Bible every week. Hamilton notes that:

Some people might later question Billy's religious faith, considering it the sham religion of one who was patently not among The Saved, but for himself Billy Blythe did feel saved and saved from a far more oppressive domestic reality than most of his contemporaries or teachers were aware of (70-71).

Billy had a devout Christian baby-sitter who had watched him since his move to Hot Springs. She predicted that he would grow up to be a preacher, given his precocity and his way with words (72). Hamilton, not fully understanding the culture and belief system of evangelical Christianity, notes:

The actual historical basis for a belief in Christ's divinity could never be proven, but it could be appreciated, indeed believed in *as gospel truth*: good news from another place, in another time, set to great choral music, emotionally reaffirming, and, however naïve, the idealistic, hope-filled product of a religious culture that offered the little boy sanctuary from the frightening violence and abuse of home; a place of spiritual peace, human community, and idealism. It was still there when he pinched

himself or wept at the war being waged between his parents; a place with a real preacher who was delighted to see him, real gospel songs sung by a real congregation of adherents, and real love, or goodwill, in the air (72).

Billy did learn to live with the dark side of psychological trauma. His drunken father would terrorize the family regularly. Hamilton says that Bill's response was to become "brilliantly good" (94). He wanted to please. He hated to be disliked. Hamilton writes, "By doing well at school and by behaving in a sensible, responsible, quasi-perfect way at home, he maximized his domestic scores while giving no license for punishment or humiliation" (94). Hamilton concludes, and I think correctly, that this would all lead to the trait that Bill carried into adult life when he became pathologically unable to admit wrong or his own mistakes. This outward perfectionism, developed in the emotionally traumatic context of a broken home, not only led to overachievement but to a simple unwillingness to admit mistakes.

In addition Billy was a "peacemaker." He had kicked his Sunbeams teacher at First Baptist as a young boy when he did not get his way. He later learned he could better handle his anger by inclusion, not exclusion, by acceptance not rejection. Concludes Hamilton, "Here [in seeking to express his megaintelligence and competitive determination in a class context] he recognized, was the real high ground: great grades and yet a feminine desire to be liked rather than feared" (95).

It is near impossible, Hamilton writes, to find anyone who knew Clinton as a young boy who did not think that he would achieve significant things in his life. Whether it was playing a musical instrument, mastering a subject, or just giving attention to others, he stood out as a different kind of boy.

Hamilton, drawing from the famous book on narcissism by Alice Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, suggests that Bill Clinton missed out on a normal childhood, casting himself into the role of a super-achiever. Hamilton goes on to suggest that Billy had "drawn on the mantle of churchly goodness, charm, precocious sociability, and a striving for excellence at

school" that gained him widespread approval and created an emotional pattern that would never allow him to lower his guard, cry like other children, rail against his fate, or run away in any sense. "By age sixteen he was having to act like forty, even saying later in life 'I never felt like I got to complete my childhood'" (102).

By the time Bill entered college, at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he was ready to try new things and seek new relationships. It was here that he began to express the personal freedom (or bondage as it became) of his sexual nature. The celebrated failure in his presidential years, with regard to the Monica Lewinsky episode in the Oval Office, was really the culmination of a reckless, constant pursuit of joy in sexual ways that dogged Bill Clinton all of his adult life. Hamilton, in fact, concludes that he was (is) a sexual addict. I think the compelling evidence he provides is convincing. The more he sought to find new ways to express his addiction the more risks he took. As he cast off those people around him who knew his weaknesses, and who sought to make him more accountable for his actions, he was even more vulnerable to stupid decision making that related to his ravenous sexual appetite. (He would sometimes have sex with several different women in the same day!)

The overachieving and highly-gifted child never really became a man, or perhaps he was never really a child and simply jumped into manhood with little real preparation emotionally or spiritually. The facts are clear to see. Bill Clinton could have done anything he wanted to do in life. He sought the presidency, even talking openly about it before he was twenty-one years of age, and he gained it. He was the "comeback kid" and "Slick Willie" all wrapped into one enigmatic but fairly uncomplicated individual.

So what does this have to do with evangelical religion?—a great deal, at least in my own view. Evangelical religion in America, especially in the twentieth century, came to reflect a kind of emotional religious subculture that had little or nothing to do with moral formation. The issue was: "Are you born again?" If this is interpreted by experience and by adherence

to cultural forms and practices, including singing our songs, quoting our verses, and walking our walk, then Bill Clinton really is an Evangelical. This is why we have our Jimmy Swagarts and Jim Bakers, too. (Both of these men are shown by Hamilton to parallel Bill Clinton in *remarkable* ways!)

To demonstrate my point further, I remind you that when Bill Clinton gave his tortured explanations of "sex" and of why he "did not have sex with that woman" he used characteristically Southern evangelical definitions of sex that made most people laugh. (I can still recall hearing my evangelical peers in the South saying, "How far can we go and not have sex?") Clinton could win the sword drills, learn the verses, achieve perfect attendance in Sunday school, and seek the counsel of leading Evangelicals for years, all the while missing the moral and social demands that Christian faith makes upon its adherents. And if anyone decided to question the answers he gave, especially to the Evangelicals who counseled him, the answer given was "Judge not lest you be judged!" (Interpreted, this means if you have accepted Jesus into your heart, been born again, and can give a clear testimony of how it happened, then you are one of us no matter what!) Bill Clinton stands as a great social marker for the baby-boom generation. If this is what an Evangelical is then we will lose all impact upon our culture. Indeed, we had already lost most of our impact before the Clinton years. Our response to Bill Clinton simply reveals our dark side and the failure to create a Christianity that can make meaningful claims upon a life that transcends cultural ebb and flow.

Bill Clinton plainly understood what was happening in the wider culture. In fact he understood it perhaps better than almost any public figure in the 1990s. Hamilton writes: "Judeo-Christian Western society certainly seemed on the cusp of tremendous changes in the wake of the sixties and seventies" (346).

The only man who ever defeated Bill Clinton in a governor's race in Arkansas was Frank White, a Christian who had spent some time on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ. White, a very conservative Baptist, rather insightfully judged

Clinton's moral failures as deeply connected to his own political and social agenda. In dealing with the challenge of Frank White to Bill Clinton's position as governor, Hamilton expresses well the heart of the Clinton enigma.

There was an enormous gap between analysis and effectiveness. Bill Clinton's social, political, and economic perception did him credit. But in eschewing old or simplistic remedies he was inevitably hobbled by his own sixties relativism, which infuriated older absolutists. As his longtime aide Bobby Roberts commented, looking back at the late seventies, "The middle ground of people simply felt this country's in a great state of flux, and not necessarily for the better all the time. A lot of people just saw him (Clinton) as a sort of symbol of that problem" (346).

Frank White noted in the early 1980s that Bill Clinton "deemed himself invincible. He just thought he could change the world. That he just couldn't do any wrong" (347). Though Clinton learned from his defeat by Frank White, recovering to beat White two years later by a large majority, it would appear that he never quite understood that he was not invincible. Hamilton shows how wrong he was and how much was lost as a result of his errors.

Hamilton's biography is well written. It is sometimes distressing, with its graphic narrative of Bill's sexual pursuits. But don't let this keep you from the book. Hamilton is also determined to trash most of the conservative political revolution of the 1980s as well. In the end, he cannot make Bill Clinton look any better than he really is. He is a brilliant man, perhaps the most brilliant who ever occupied the White House, but he plainly missed a golden opportunity to make a serious contribution to the life of our nation. His ability to multitask is famous. His genius in managing damage is beyond equal. But his life is bankrupt and I sense that the nation will pay price for his failure in leadership for a long time.

One thing that surprised me, as I read Hamilton, was how much I came to respect Hillary Clinton. This may sound surprising at first. I am not saying I endorse her political goals and ideas at all. I am saying she is a bright, capable, hard-working

and creative person who has accomplished a great deal in a marriage that has proven again and again to be difficult. Why has she remained with Bill? Conservative pundits suggest that this is all about her own grab for power. Maybe, maybe not. After reading Hamilton I have come to the conclusion that Hillary really loves Bill Clinton. She stays married to Bill because he brings an equal brilliance to her life, joined with a fun-loving and playful personality that Hillary needs. (By the way, both Clintons love Chelsea and they did, overall, a great job in rearing her to adulthood in spite of the trials of their own marriage.) The accusation that Hillary is disinterested in the sexual side of marriage (even a lesbian according to some scurrilous rumors), or that she is not a caring and warm person, are quite misinformed. She is a liberal in her political philosophy, for sure, but she is also an amazing woman who has balanced motherhood, career and marriage through some difficult times.

Finally, the real Bill Clinton is neither the buffoon of the conservative talk show hosts nor is he the raving liberal of the far left. He was a new kind of Democrat who almost saved his party. He could have accomplished a great deal more for his nation. After reading Nigel Hamilton's biography, I find myself neither despising him *nor* admiring him. I find him an immense tragedy, even more so because he had such a profound exposure to evangelical Christianity in both his childhood and adult life.

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG  
Editor-in-Chief



WELL, WHERE DID OUR TIME GO? BEFORE CLEARING OUT, LET'S TAKE A QUICK MOMENT TO CLOSE IN PRAYER.

SISSON