

constituency's beliefs, and an examination of how the Pentecostals have related to American culture.

Blumhofer's volume (the published version of a Harvard dissertation) undertakes with fair success a rather complex analysis of a major movement in twentieth-century American religious history. In the process, it is the dynamic of the ever-changing approach to restorationism and the conflict between the primitivists and the accommodationists that takes center stage rather than the history of the Assemblies of God. But that is as it should be, since the author's focus is on restorationism as illustrated in Assemblies of God history rather than on a denominational history itself.

Blumhofer has given us an insightful volume that will stand alongside Donald Dayton's *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Zondervan, 1987), Vinson Synan's *Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Eerdmans, 1971) and Robert M. Anderson's *Vision of the Disinherited* (Oxford, 1979) as a necessary interpretive contribution to the history of one of America's most dynamic religious movements.

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Brueggemann, Walter. *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storied Universe*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993. 160 pp. Paper, \$12.95.

In this work, Brueggemann, professor of OT at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, attempts to develop a theological framework for evangelism today. He attempts to accomplish this through the biblical text itself rather than from a sociological perspective. His thesis revolves around evangelism in a "three-storied universe," referring to the "promise made to the ancestors, the deliverance from slavery, and the gift of the land" (9).

Brueggemann argues that each of these three stories must be told and retold through successive generations, and that the retelling of these stories and their acceptance by successive generations constitutes the heart of the evangelistic mandate. He then devotes three chapters to defining three groups that should be the object of evangelism: "outsiders who become insiders" (chap. 2), "forgetters who are made rememberers" (chap. 3), and "beloved children who become belief-ful adults" (chap. 4). In Brueggemann's view these three groups (non-members, inactives, and children) become the prime targets of the evangelistic message according to the biblical text.

While Brueggemann attempts to construct his theology of evangelism from the biblical text, he seems selective in the texts which he has chosen to develop his evangelistic theology. At times he seems to strain a text to make it conform to his thesis. Nowhere in the book does he declare that he is attempting to construct from the OT a theology of evangelism for the church today, yet that is precisely what he has done. That is understandable since his major field is the OT. However, it would have been helpful to the reader to understand that from the beginning.

To arrive at a theology of evangelism from the OT while ignoring the great commission texts of the NT results in a distorted understanding of evangelism. As a result, Brueggemann sees evangelism as merely the changing of a person's life focus to one of social consciousness. When this is done, one can be admitted into the community of faith because that community exists for the purpose of accomplishing a social agenda, especially in the political process.

This reviewer questions whether Brueggemann has truly constructed even an OT understanding of evangelism. God's purpose for ancient Israel evangelistically was to bring the knowledge of the true God to the nations, yet one searches in vain to discover any hint of that in Brueggemann's work. It seems, at times, as if belief in God was not even a part of the evangelistic agenda. Certain passages in the book also cause this reviewer to question whether Brueggemann, who claims to be an evangelical, really believes in the truthfulness of Scripture. "God is not a being 'out there,' but a character in a textual drama to which we are witnesses and potentially participants" (112). "The Genesis stories haunt us . . . not because we take them as 'factual'" (108).

When one questions the historicity of the scriptural story, it is understandable how one can construct a theology of evangelism that basically revolves around accomplishing a social agenda through the political process. Brueggemann basically fails to accomplish what he sets out to do in the beginning of his book: to create a theology of evangelism based on the biblical text itself. He selectively uses texts primarily from the OT, ignoring the great evangelistic passages and historical evidence for evangelism in the NT which attempt to help people individually to accept the Lordship of Christ in their lives. The result is a distorted concept of evangelism, making social consciousness the end product of evangelization.

While true conversion will result in social consciousness, it is not the ultimate task of evangelization. While this reviewer has a difficult time accepting Brueggemann's basic thesis, yet the book does help raise one's social awareness. Christian mission has erred in two extremes: an emphasis on personal salvation while ignoring social responsibility, and acceptance of a social gospel while ignoring personal salvation. Brueggemann has gone to the latter extreme. To his credit he has attempted to justify his social gospel evangelism from the biblical text, even if he has had to strain certain texts to accomplish this task. One clear example of this "straining" is chapter 2, which is based on Josh 24. Brueggemann attempts to apply this concept to Canaanites, the outsiders who were becoming insiders. Yet Josh 24:1 clearly references this passage to the tribes of Israel.

Christians who are committed to the historicity of Scripture and the proclamation of a clear evangelistic message to all nations will find little in this work to help them in their evangelistic mandate. Those who are more comfortable with a social-gospel approach to evangelism will find food for thought in this book, but must carefully weigh its limited scriptural base with the more complete understanding of evangelism enshrined in the entire Bible, especially the NT.