

sodium and chlorine, potentially dangerous and even deadly as individuals, but a blessing to bland foods in the form of sodium chloride. Petersen labors to liberate *contemplatio* from its conventional understanding. Despite 1,500 years of monastic living, there is nothing in the word that requires the stereotype of vowed separation from full human living. Petersen is “determined to do what [he] can to get the term ‘contemplation’ into circulation in the world of the everyday” (110-111). He will democratize the concept by noting that children all begin as contemplatives, attentive enough to flowers and ants to be oblivious to all else (111).

Section 3, “The Company of Translators,” is the best section of the book. Its first chapter (chap. 8) traces the process of translation through Ezra and Aramaic, the NT and Greek, to translation in English. It lays the groundwork for his longest chapter, chapter 9 on Petersen's remarkable Bible paraphrase, *The Message*. In it, he warns against “sacrilege downward,” blasphemous language, and “sacrilege upward,” pretentious language (138), and expatiates on the translation history of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer. Whether or not one knows the story, Petersen's storytelling mastery makes it worth rehearing, rereading.

For all the times we have striven to know instead of grow, Petersen urges that we practice once again, as our ancestors did long ago, a reading whose goal is wisdom: the wisdom for “*becoming* true and good, not just knowing about the facts of life or how to change a tire” (177, emphasis original). His *Eat This Book* is eminently readable, completely credible, and irresistibly relevant. Read it. Eat it.

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LAEL CAESAR

Reuther, Rosemary Radford, *America, Amerikkka, Elect Nation and Imperial Violence*.

London: Equinox, 2007. 291 pp. Hardcover, \$90.00.

America, Amerikkka is a historical analysis of America's view of itself as an elect nation chosen by God to redeem and dominate the world. The author traces this idea across the span of American history and notes that America's messianic role has always been present but has been constantly adjusted and retooled in each era to justify its imperialistic designs. It was manifested in the wars of conquest against the native population; the Western expansion with Manifest Destiny as its watchword; the Mexican war that captured over half of Mexican territory; the Spanish-American war that captured the Spanish territories of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines; and the Monroe doctrine and its corollary that gave America economic and military hegemony over Latin America and the Caribbean. Presently, we hear its echo in the war against terror that justifies America's invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. The neoconservatives who propelled America into war against Iraq, having failed to find weapons of mass destruction to justify their invasion and occupation of Iraq, have now fallen back on an old and tried reason: spreading democracy because it is America's duty as a special nation. Hearing them speak like this suggests that God has given America a divine mandate to spread democracy and freedom around the world.

Rosemary Radford Reuther, in a series of historical surveys, sets out to prove her thesis of how America views itself as this “elect nation, inhabiting the Promised Land and enjoying a uniquely favored relation with God and a mission to spread ‘redemption’ qua democracy throughout the world.” In this masterful book, she has shown how America has used this language of divine election as a subterfuge to deceive people about its real mission, which, in reality, is no different from that of every other world power that has preceded it. America has sought to dominate and control, using whatever means necessary and at its disposal.

In chapter 1, she traces the idea of election back to Europe by showing that most of the colonial powers of Europe shared a version of this idea, in which they saw themselves as a type of elect nation chosen to civilize and Christianize the world. In chapter 2, this ideology found expression in the founding of the American identity as the redeeming people of liberty and justice for all. The magnificent documents of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence spoke eloquently of these values, but actually America was enslaving over three million Blacks and defining them as three-fifths human. The nation was also engaged in the genocide of the native people and excluding all women and the majority of the poor from the rights of citizenship. Chapter 3 traces the expansion of White settlement across the western frontier and how the ideology of Manifest Destiny and Anglo-Saxon racism were used as justification to conquer and colonize the western states and half of Mexico's territory. Chapter 4 describes the rise of America as a global power at the end of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5 shows America strutting on the world stage, claiming to defend freedom and democracy against the totalitarian system of Communism. This gave it the right to intervene anywhere in the world where its interests and national security were threatened, while claiming to be fighting to establish democracy and freedom. Chapter 6 brings us to the present, where America is again the vanguard against terrorism and Islamic fascism, precipitated by the events of September 11. This war on terror is depicted as an "apocalyptic drama of good against evil, the angels of light against the forces of darkness. America, God's chosen people, is once more pitted against God's enemies. This language assumes an American redemptive mission to the world. America in general and Bush in particular are seen as God's messianic agents in combating evil and establishing good on the earth" (261).

Reuther has written a devastating and damning critique of America's history by showing the deep disconnect between what America thinks their history is and how other people have experienced the evil underside of America's imperialism. In the final chapters of her book, she points out that in every generation there has always been a critical minority who have risen up to expose and unmask America's deception. They were not afraid to point out America's imperialistic and colonial actions that contradicted its verbal and idealistic profession.

The author describes a number of these critics, starting with Roger Williams, whom many consider the father of religious liberty in America and who vociferously denounced the idea of that the Puritan colony of Massachusetts was specifically Christian. Williams excoriated the Puritans for their treatment of the native people, which resulted in his expulsion from the colony. During the Revolutionary War, Thomas Paine, for example, pointed out the contradictions between America's professions and actions. Slavery was a good example of this, and he vehemently opposed it. Paine's critique of slavery was not only to identify its barbarity, but to propose a plan of emancipation. These voices were always in the minority and the nation paid little attention as it hurtled toward civil war. However, in the decades before the war, movements such as the abolitionists' and women's sought to bring the ideals of freedom, liberty, and democracy to the attention of the nation. Key figures such as William Lloyd Garrison, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Frederick Douglass would lend their voices, influence, and energy to the growing number of critics of the American republic. They described slavery as a national sin and a heinous crime against humanity that was rooted in racism. When the Civil War ended, many Americans came to view the war as a kind of blood atonement by the nation for the sin of slavery. But once the war ended, it appeared that America had not learned its lesson, but quickly

reverted back to its old ways, as shown by its imperialistic designs on the world, its continued neglect of the poor, and its continued racism against Blacks that resulted in their economic, social, and political impoverishment.

Martin Luther King Jr. emerged on the national stage, following the long line of prophetic voices, to once again call America back to its ideals. He ignited a revolution that opened up opportunities for many minorities, but in the last twenty years America has backslid on its promises toward the poorer segments of its population.

Critics of American policy did not reject the idea that America had a mission to pursue justice and liberty for all, but used the vision to unmask its betrayal and fought to bring real public policies in line with these ideals. The author herself belongs to this prophetic tradition, and I applaud her courage in writing such a book in the light of present-day events. What she has written here demands our attention and requires our urgent action. In her final chapter, she spells out an alternative vision of America that provides for the reader to become involved in bringing the ideals of freedom, liberty, and justice to light in the current generation.

The author, however, could have provided more balance to the book by looking at the myriad ways in which America has played a constructive role in the history of the world. America does have its flaws, but it is still a great place to live and it is no wonder that millions all over the world would love to come to America. The use of the triple “k” in the spelling of America is unnecessarily provocative because of its association with the noted racist organization, the Ku Klux Klan.

This book should be read by all, especially those who consider themselves belonging to the prophetic minority. Here are seven reasons why this book should be read: (1) we see America in its totality—not just the pretty face our leaders want us to see, but the dark underside; (2) we see something of the suffering of those who are the victims of American imperialism; (3) we recognize the contradiction between American global aspirations and its ideology of benignity; (4) we get a sense of how America’s role in the world is not always positive, but, at times, has created ecological disasters, political instability, and economic disparity; (5) we see a picture of where America may be heading in the future and where concerns over security will erode or even eliminate many of the cherished rights granted by our Constitution; (6) the book is a clarion call to rise up and let our voices be heard in the same fashion as those brave witnesses before us; and (7) the book provides a stark warning to us that if we don’t do something soon, it will be too late.

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Roy, Steven C. *How Much Does God Foreknow?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006. 312 pp. Paperback, \$22.00.

Steven C. Roy is a faculty member at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. *How Much Does God Foreknow?* follows his dissertation on the same subject and is an important contribution to the age-old debate on divine foreknowledge. It was to be expected, therefore, that the introduction to Roy’s study would mention various attempts that have been made to deal with the question of divine foreknowledge and its related issues. He deals specifically with divine foreknowledge of an individual’s free decision, an issue initiated by the proposition of the open theists. The open theists’ proposition is that “God’s omniscient knowledge rightly includes absolutely everything about the past and the present, [but] it does not include certain elements of the future. Specifically, it does not include future free decisions made by moral beings who have been endowed by their Creator with libertarian freedom, nor does it include any element of the future of