

BOOK REVIEWS

Transfiguring Capitalism: An Enquiry into Religion and Global Change,
by John Atherton. Beccles, Suffolk: SCM Press, 2008. 342 pp.
sb. \$50.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-334-028314.

Reviewed by Geoffrey Holsclaw

Transfiguring Capitalism is a wide-ranging book seeking to better illuminate the role of religion within our globalizing world. John Atherton's argument moves across the fields of political economy, current research into well-being and happiness, and Christian social ethics, and also incorporates detailed case studies to illustrate his argument. His purpose is to chart a course between a nostalgic Christendom response to globalization and its secularizing double which pays no attention to religion. Atherton attempts to give the social, economic, and political fields their due independence even while not sacrificing the significant contributions which religion gives to each of these fields. For Atherton, "religion has a necessary if not essential place in our world, historically, contemporarily and in the future, in terms of contributing to the necessary maintenance and transformation of our world" (1).

Atherton divides his book into three parts. The first explores the context of his investigation by outlining the interaction between various competing fields such as empires, capitalism, globalization, and the resurgence of religion in each of these. The chapters in this part offer overviews of each field as well as interacting with various interpretations of the phenomena. This part starts off with a critical edge toward empires and capitalism by examining their historical roots and contemporary manifestations, yet it resolves with a tempered affirmation of an ethical globalization. Equally helpful in this part is Atherton's exploration of resurgent religion, social capital, and their potential interaction as *faithful capital*. This combination of what is *faithful* and what is *capital* forms the chief ambition of the book, attempting to unite what many theologians and economist seek to keep apart. For Atherton, faithful capital is a "challenge to capitalist political economy and economics to recognize the importance of the moral...including religion, and a challenge to religion to engage with political economy" (102). This paradoxical relation between faith and capital functions alongside another paradox, which is that religion creates the necessary conditions favourable to economic activity by propagating certain values and creating certain associations, even while this same economic activity erodes these religious values and associations.

The second part is divided into two chapters that deal first with outlining current research in well-being and happiness, and then with relating these to faith-based contributions to well-being. It is here that Atherton explores the strange paradox between happiness and capitalism. When a person or community is living within scarce resources, a small increase in material prosperity causes a

significant increase in well-being and happiness. But in what Atherton calls a post-scarcity context where basic needs are met, then an increase in material prosperity causes only a relative increase in well-being. Rather, in post-scarcity communities, an increase in well-being and happiness is usually related to an increase in social and faithful capital. In both contexts Atherton explores the contribution which religion makes through bonding and bridging types of social capital by making use of extensive fieldwork and case studies.

The last part of the books draws out the implications of the previous investigations by relating religion, well-being, and economic theory and practice. He opens this part by reflecting on the transfiguration narrative in scripture, which for Atherton symbolizes the materiality of life (the robes of Jesus being turned whiter than anyone could bleach them), the importance of tradition (Jesus being surrounded by Moses and Elijah), and the intervention of transcendence (in the voice from heaven). This sets the stage for later chapters to explore the need for a theological anthropology beyond that of liberal economic theory, a renewed interfaith ethics of the common good, and an articulation of a faithful economics which makes room for transcendence in human life.

This last part is certainly the most creative, but also the most uneven. The chapter on typologies and traditions is so helpful in outlining the development of Christian social ethics, particularly its British derivation, that the reader would have been helped to come across this material much earlier in the book. Likewise, his chapter on the ethics and the common good seems more full of assertions than arguments, weakening the impact of his policy suggestions. However, his chapters on the possibilities of a theological anthropology and a faithful economics are richly suggestive for future research. These chapters explore the emergence of a post-scarcity anthropology based in human dignity and sociality as the image of God, as well as tracing the linkages between a moral economy and an economy of grace.

For those with a bent toward religion within the fields of sociology and political science, or those theologians looking to get up to speed on various aspects of economic or political theory, this book is highly recommended. But some theologians and philosophers may feel that Atherton moves too quickly in correlating Christian doctrine to socio-economic phenomena. But this is the price that Atherton is willing to pay in exchange for commending *faithful capital* on the global market of ideas.

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The Sleeping Giant Has Awoken: The New Politics of Religion in the United States, by Jeffrey W. Robbins and Neal Magee, eds.
New York & London: Continuum, 2008. x+237 pp. pb. \$19.95.
ISBN-13: 9780826429698.

Reviewed by Amos Yong

This collection of thirteen essays – not including the introduction by John Caputo and the postface by Slavoj Žižek – was inspired by conversations following the re-election of George W. Bush to the presidency of the United States in 2004. The authors, mostly younger scholars (with the exception of Caputo and Žižek, renowned names no doubt “hired” at least in part to gain the book a wider readership) either affiliated with more-or-less smaller colleges, universities, and seminaries in the U.S. or else working as independent researchers, write with energy, passion, and insight throughout, arguing two main themes from various angles in the process: that there is, in America, a new religion of politics, in which the political is engaged with religious fervor, as well as, concomitantly, a new politics of religion, in which there is a politicization of religion in the public square, and that such a religiously inspired politics and a politically shaped religiosity is intertwined with the consumerism and global market capitalism which links America to the rest of the world. The common thread throughout is conservative evangelicalism or the “Religious Right,” the religious movement that mobilized to make the re-election of Bush possible.

While most of the essays approach these topics from historical, philosophical, or theological perspective, a few are informed by political science and religious studies methodologies. There are discussions of “family values” (and how the individualistic ontology and consumerism of American evangelicalism actually undermines such); theocracy (its roots deep in the American religious imagination, its political traditions, and its history of biblical interpretation); capitalism (and the classism it generates, perpetuates, and exacerbates); freedom (and its ambivalence and polyvalence as a discursive concept used by the Bush administration); democracy (as understood across the right-left spectrum); among many other like and interrelated topics.

Overall one might say that *The Sleeping Giant Has Awoken* represents something like a call to attention from the cultural and religious left – or, read ironically, it announces the left’s own realization of the Right’s entry into the political domain. While almost all of the essayists are quite critical of the Religious Right understood as a political and religious movement, for the most part the vitriolic and polemical rhetoric often found in left circles is moderated in this book (for which we may have the editors to thank). At the same time, readers of this book should thus be considered forewarned that this is not the place to look if one is seeking critically loyal analyses of not only the Bush administration but also the evangelical Right. There is only one recognizably evangelical (younger) scholar among the contributors, and that essay – “Prophetic Evangelicals: Toward a Politics of Hope” – is among the most constructive:

critical about blind spots in the evangelical horizon, but yet strategically suggestive about how to draw from the available resources of the wider evangelical tradition to ameliorate, correct, and even overhaul evangelical political engagement going forward. But if one persists through the book carefully, one will also encounter self-critical analyses from among this leftward group – e.g., the assessment that multiculturalism (the alter-identity to the white evangelical establishment) as an ideology of inclusivism supports rather than interrogates the bourgeois, capitalist, and neoliberal status quo.

If readers of this journal can overlook some of the well-worn clichés offered as criticisms of the evangelical right (which appear only every now & then), this book is an otherwise engaging read, carefully written (for the most part), intelligent, and astute. Evangelicals may not learn much about what the left think is wrong about the right (many of the criticisms will be familiar), but they will gain a greater appreciation for what is important across the spectrum of the left as the culture (and political) wars continue to rage.

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The Gods of War: Is Religion the Primary Cause of Violent Conflict? by Meic Pearse. Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2007.

232 pp. pb. £9.99. ISBN-13: 978-1-84474-226-4

Reviewed by Stephen M. Vantassel

Atheists have long argued that religious belief is an essential cause of war. Although conceding that some wars (e.g. the Crusades) were motivated by religion, Pearse's masterful review of the historical evidence demonstrated that religion's role in the initiation of hostilities was rarely as obvious as the atheists would have us believe.

Pearse explains that the difficulty in finding a direct correlation between religion and conflict results from several factors. First, occasionally religion was co-mingled with nationalism to form a religious nationalist myth as occurred in Serbia, Russia, and England. Leaders then exploited these myths as a device to encourage national unity. Religion did not initiate the violence but was instead used to justify the fighting after it had begun.

Second, although all religions are equally susceptible to violent behavior, Pearse trenchantly observes that Christianity existed for over 300 years before taking up the sword. Third, secularism's own tendency toward absolutism has stimulated violence. Secularism with its gods of consumerism, a-religiousness, and elimination of cultural differences threatens many who hold to traditional values. Pearse says we should not be surprised when traditionalists respond to secularism through violence.

So what causes war? Pearse believes the answer lies in human history. Once humans established farming, the desire to control land, food, and other resources also grew. Hunter-gatherers quickly learned that it was easier to steal food from the farmers than to find their own. Farmers responded by hiring protection, which resulted in the establishment of a military class as well as create a peasant class. Class structure (accompanied by familial ties) made room for wars over honor and/or security. In short, greed is the cause of war.

Pearse believes his assessment accords with Scripture. He believes that Cain's murder of Abel to be an archetypal account of the conflict over land as expressed between farmers (Cain) and pastoralists (Abel). Whatever the exact motivation for Cain's actions, Pearse rejects any suggestion that the fight was a religious one. I certainly appreciate Pearce's point. My difficulty with his presentation is that by emphasizing greed as the motivation for conflict, Pearse has deemphasized the vertical aspect of sin, which is rebellion against God's commands. I think Cain murdered Abel because of envy over God's blessing, not because of greed over material blessing.

After demonstrating that religion is not the primary cause of war, the next question is, "How should Christians understand the relationship between their faith and politics?" Pearse says, Christians should learn from the mistakes of the past and avoid attempts of uniting Christianity with the state. Religion's role should be personal and private.

The God's of War is a well written and thoughtful text that anyone, wishing to defend theism from the charge of warmongering, should read. The book also challenges Christians to take stock of how they have permitted Christianity to be used by political entities in justifying war. His work raises painful questions that must be considered by Christians espousing pacifism or Just War theory. Clearly, war presents incredible moral difficulties. But suggesting war is a necessary moral evil does little to help Christians decide whether they should join the military or become "Conscientious Objectors." A second shortcoming was the absence of clearer insights on how theists could determine if a religion was being co-opted to justify a war. These minor weaknesses aside, readers will find that their time with this text will be amply rewarded. I strongly recommend the book as a second or third text for instructors of apologetics, history, and political courses.

When Enough is Enough: A Christian Framework for Environmental Sustainability, by R. J. Berry, ed. Nottingham: APOLLOS/IVP, 2007.
vii+213 pp. £11.99. ISBN-13: 9781844741809.

Reviewed by Stephen Vantassel

The book is a collection of revised articles which were originally presented at a joint Conference of Christians in Science on the topic of "The Christian Framework for Sustainability" which took place in London on 1 October 2005.

The authors approach the topic from their particular disciplines, such as science, economics, non-governmental organizations, and theology.

The editor, R.J. Berry, in the opening article set the tone by defending the notion that God wants us to care for his creation in a sustainable way. Berry rejected the extreme environmentalist position as well as the extreme dominion view because the former fails to acknowledge the creator and the latter because it ignores God's goal to redeem creation. The following articles added substance to Berry's view by discussing how sustainability can be expressed in theology, non-human creation, economics, agriculture, social justice, resource use, and eschatological vision. Broadly speaking, the authors suggested that sustainability be achieved by reducing consumption both directly and through recycling, rejection of laissez faire market capitalism in favor of more government intervention, and active recognition that environmental action is to be done to the glory of God. It must be made clear, however, that although the authors occupy a middle position, the articles are decidedly pulled toward the environmentalist's pole. Potential readers should be aware that the perspectives of Calvin Beisner and Bjorn Lomborg are explicitly criticized.

I commend the authors for their proper desire to call Christians to take up their creation care responsibilities. The articles discuss some important problems worthy of responsible Christian reflection. However, the book contains several regrettable weaknesses. First, the authors should have been more concrete and refined in the principles they proffered. Simply telling people to balance their greed with sustainability does not provide enough information to help them evaluate their behavior. The authors' use of vague terms like "environmental degradation" neglected the question of what standard is being used. The fact is human finitude creates the problem of "opportunity cost." All human activity can be seen as causing environmental degradation. Furthermore, sometimes the environmental cure is worse than the disease. Just consider the much maligned pesticide DDT. Its improper use as a broadcast spray was responsible for dramatic declines in avian reproductive recruitment. However, when used as a structural pesticide, it provides residents cost-effective protection against mosquitoes that poses minimal environmental risk. Unfortunately, the draconian international ban on its manufacture has resulted in millions of Africans contracting malaria who otherwise would have been spared. The authors should have worked harder to provide a framework to Christians evaluate the costs of their decisions that accords with the values contained in the books of the "Word" and "Nature".

Second, the writers should have provided a biblical theology of the human-nature interaction and thereby avoided the proof-texting approach. I was shocked to learn that as passage as critical to the topic as Psalm 8 was not mentioned (see p.211). Finally, sustainability is certainly a worthy goal. But what would a sustainable society look like? As the authors related their concerns regarding consumption, population growth, environmental degradation, and climate change, I wondered how we would know when sustainability had been achieved.

In conclusion, the subject is indeed an important one. But the authors do a better job in explaining the problem than in providing a Christian framework (either ideological or practical) for how Christians should respond.

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For Zion's Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby,
by Paul Richard Wilkinson. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007.
308 pp. pb. £19.99. ISBN-13: 978-1-84227-569-6.

Reviewed by Mark S. Sweetnam

The title of this book combines two subjects that have generated a large amount of highly critical and often polemical debate. Academic treatments of Christian Zionism tend, most often, to denigrate its adherents, ridicule its intellectual underpinnings, and express dismay at the political implications of the movement. The literature on John Nelson Darby – the Irish clergyman and most profound formative influence on Dispensationalism – tends, likewise, to be largely negative, frequently emphasising Darby's involvement in the early split in the so-called Plymouth Brethren movement. It is refreshing, therefore, to find in this book a discussion of both subjects that treats them in a manner that manages to combine sympathy and scholarship.

That combination, of course, is not an easy balancing act. Whether or not one feels that Wilkinson successfully pulls it off is likely to be determined by one's sympathy with the Zionist cause that he discusses. Certainly, it would be a mistake to describe this as a disinterested book. Wilkinson writes with considerable zeal and conviction, and makes no secret of his admiration for Darby and his sympathy for Christian Zionism. At times this zeal does carry him into the realm of the polemical. By and large, however, Wilkinson's conviction about the truth of the views that he discusses is refreshing. So too is the honesty with which he reveals this conviction. This indeed, is not the least of the reasons why this book does an excellent job of combining ideological investment with scholarly investigation.

The material covered in Wilkinson's book is divided into eight chapters. Each of these chapters is sub-divided into a series of discrete sections. This makes for an orderly proceeding, and considerable ease of reference, though these benefits come at the cost of a lack of fluidity as a fluid narrative flow is broken up.

The first two chapters survey the ideological opposition that is central to the book. The first chapter defines Christian Zionism. In order to do so it first surveys briefly Jewish Zionism. It then goes on to make a distinction, which is

fundamental to this book between Christian Zionism and other forms of pro-Israeli sentiment: it is, Wilkinson argues, 'a fundamentally Biblical, Evangelical, and eschatological interest in Israel's restoration.' (p.16) Wilkinson then provides a terse discussion of the crucial issues informing Christian Zionist thought. In the second chapter, Wilkinson take us through the looking glass, and discusses Christian Palestinianism's inversion of Zionist concepts. It begins with an account of the conversion to Palestianism of the erstwhile dispensationalist Stephen Sizer, and his subsequent work an Christian Zionism's chief detractor. The chapter then moves on to consider the key concerns of Christian Palestinianists: their accusations that Christian Zionists are 'anxious for Armageddon, the recurrent charges of 'Zionist apartheid', and the Zionist use of the Holocaust to send the world, and especially their opponents on an historical guilt trip. Wilkinson also discusses the theology that, in his account, underpins the Christian Palestinianist movements – both Calvinist 'replacement theology' and the far more *outré* attacks upon Scripture by the Roman Catholic Palestianist, Michael Prior. The chapter closes with an account of the foundation of *Sabeel* which, Wilkinson argues, 'has helped to define and to solidify Christian Palestinianism.' (p.61)The discussion in this chapter is antipathetic to the aims and methods of Christian Palestinianism, but Wilkinson is moderate in his discussion. He is also careful to allow Christian Palestinianists to speak for themselves, quoting from as wide a range of relevant sources as can be accommodated in the confines of the chapter.

With this groundwork in place, the book turns to the other subject identified in the title: John Nelson Darby. Chapter three provides a biographical discussion. This is, necessarily, selective, but notably, in addition to Darby's often-discussed involvement in controversy, Wilkinson highlights the human and pastoral side of Darby. Given the cold and fanatical figure that has tended to emerge from some discussions of this enormously influential man, this discussion is a valuable redressing of the balance. The fourth chapter then considers Darby's eschatology, in particular the nascent dispensationalism to which he gave expression. This is an enormous subject, and Wilkinson, wisely, does not attempt an all-encompassing discussion. Rather, true to the intention of the book and this chapter's role within it, he concentrates on the implications of Darby's theology for his view of Israel.

The next three chapters then backtrack, chronologically, to survey the longer context of Darby's theology. Chapter five is entitled 'The Puritans', but discusses views of Israel from the post-Apostolic Church, through the Middle Ages and Reformation and up to the eighteenth century. The scale of this survey prevents its being anything more than just that, but it provides an historical context for Darby's work. The more immediate context of that work is surveyed in chapter six, which discusses 'Nineteenth Century Restorationism. This chapter is similarly wide-ranging, but it does look in some detail at the Albury Park conferences, and at the premillennialism of Edward Irving. Wilkinson engages with the debate that has raged sporadically over the origins of

Darby's teaching on the Rapture, and firmly scotches any notion that either Irving himself, or the ecstatic utterances of Margaret MacDonald, a Scottish Irvingite girl (the transcript of MacDonald's utterances is very usefully included in an appendix), were the sources of Darby's Rapture. Chapter seven sidesteps a little from the thrust of previous chapters, providing a fascinating discussion of the roots of 'holy land tourism', the nineteenth century fascination with discovering and exploring the land of the Bible.

Wilkinson's final chapter addresses Darby's afterlife in the United States. It is a fascinating feature of history that dispensationalism, despite its roots in Ireland and England, had its farthest-reaching and most enduring influence on the western shores of the Atlantic. Wilkinson seeks to account for this, highlighting the importance of Darby's visits to America, his connections with the Bible conference movement, and the role of those who were influenced by him.

Wilkinson's book is important. Its chief importance is that it provides an alternative scholarly perspective on two subjects that have most often been studied from unsympathetic viewpoints. It is also a reminder that good scholarship can be produced, even when issues of personal faith are involved. The book is clearly and concisely written, and very well documented, making it a useful guide for further study of Darby and of Christian Zionism. It is, perhaps, a pity that its structure does sacrifice fluidity and readability. Nonetheless, this is a book that deserves a wide and careful readership.

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Understanding Evangelical Media: The Changing Face of Christian Communication, by Quentin J. Schultze and Robert H. Woods Jr, eds.

Downers Grove, ILL: IVP, 2008. 347 pp. pb. \$22.00.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8308-2881-1.

Reviewed by Gordon James Klingenschmitt

If you or your students wish to understand the breadth and scope of modern Christian communications, from television to radio, the internet to the music industry, and publishing of all sorts, *Understanding Evangelical Media* is a must-read. Schultze and Woods have assembled a masterful team of 52 contributors (mostly teachers at leading Evangelical Universities), to write 21 well-researched academic essays, interspersed with scores of independently colorful vignettes.

Starting by defining the terms "Evangelical" or "Christian" in reference to communications media, the editors open ecumenical doors among members of all Christian tribes who promote faith in Jesus Christ, whether evangelical, mainline Protestant, or Roman Catholic. Specifically included are two chapters with analytical views of Evangelical media by Jewish and Catholic scholars.

Paul A. Creasman examines the changing nature of Christian radio, from its inception in the 1930's with programs like Charles E. Fuller's "Old Fashioned Revival Hour" to modern talk-oriented radio stations that distribute popular programs, produced and hosted by James Dobson, Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley, and others. The rise of talk-format networks such as American Family Radio, and Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) networks including Salem and K-Love, are both explained. Competitors and challenges are noted, in light of the aging audience for Christian content, and the claim that since 1998, the preaching/teaching format has lost half its audience and many young listeners.

Kathy Bruner examines Christian television, challenging evangelicals to rise above traditional programming that may have offered only cheap-grace entertainment messages, or constantly fundraising "sow-a-seed of faith" messages. Instead she sees signs of hope in programs like the youth-inspiring "Travel The Road" which follows Tim Scott and Will Decker on missionary adventures through 25 countries. Despite acknowledging the "YouTube" generation that receives short videos via cell-phones and IPODs, over 80% of Christian TV broadcasters do not plan to change their audience or business model, and 85% still seek viewer contributions as their primary source of revenue.

Terry Lindvall and Andrew Quicke discuss the film industry, and how Christians have used the silver screen to promote faith in Christ. As evidenced by the global success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, and Campus Crusade's *Jesus* film shown in 1000+ languages to 6 Billion people (rendering perhaps 200 million decisions for Christ), the appetite for Christian film continues to grow. Innovative production houses such as the Sherwood Baptist Church in Georgia (*Facing The Giants, Fireproof*), and the 8X movie studio started by Trinity Broadcasting Network (*Omega Code, One Night With The King*) have now competed with otherwise secular filmmakers (Disney: *Chronicles of Narnia*) to chase the Christian audience dollar.

Ken Waters traces the rise of Christian periodicals, including magazines and internet-based newspapers, such as Cameron Strang's recently launched *Relevant Magazine*, which started with internet-submitted testimonies by 100,000 participants, and blossomed into another successful magazine (by the same family that brought us *Charisma Magazine*). Waters discusses how traditional Christian magazines like *Christianity Today, World, and Sojourners* cater to Evangelical, Conservative, and Progressive audiences, respectively.

Michael A. Longinow discusses publication of popular books, ranging from world-renowned evangelist Billy Graham and Josh McDowell (*More Than A Carpenter*), to modern apologists like Lee Strobel (*The Case For Christ*), to entertaining novels like Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series, which sold over 50 million copies. While Longinow omits full discussion of academic publishing of Christian textbooks, he astutely covers modern packaging, re-formatting, and distribution of the all-time global best-seller, *The Holy Bible*.

Brian Fuller, Stephanie Bennett, and Robert H. Woods, Jr. each contribute a significant chapter on development of the Christian music industry, from liturgy/worship-enhancing multi-sensory PowerPoint slide-shows, to the weekly top-10 CCM popular Christian music count-down, to the explosive growth of Christian Worship Music (which sales doubled between 1997 and 2002). Perhaps Charles Wesley would be impressed.

Paul D. Patton discusses Evangelicals in Theatre. Annalee Ward writes about faith-based amusement parks and museums. Diane M. Badzinski examines the growing trend toward merchandizing of “Jesus Products,” by everyone from Wal-Mart to Ebay, from books to trinkets such as the “Jesus Sports Football Statue” (which completes a “Hail Mary” pass, but does not yet come as a Bobble-head doll). Badzinski intelligently questions such “branding” of Jesus as presenting a devotional dilemma, but stops short of the holy anger and “turning over tables” that Jesus himself displayed when merchants blasphemed the Holiness of God into a cheapened sales opportunity.

Thomas J. Carmody discusses Christian cartoons and comics. Kevin Schut discusses whether the video-game industry can be Christianized. Terri Lynn Cornwell examines Christian advertising and marketing. Peter A. Kerr discusses public relations strategies of Christian industry. Robert S. Fortner discusses the internationalization of Christian media, and Mark Fackler writes an intelligent chapter on ethics, including topics such as objectivity in Christian journalism.

Paul A. Soukup, S.J. offers a Roman Catholic view of Evangelical Media, including the motivation behind the Catholic launch of the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), and Pope John Paul II’s 1989 encouragement (on World Communications Day), that the Church take advantage of every technology possible to promote the scriptures and faith.

Mark I. Pinsky offers a Jewish perspective, especially praising the production of Old Testament themed features, such as Jeffrey Katzenberg’s animated feature *The Prince Of Egypt*, and the *VeggieTales* animations, which parody mostly Old Testament stories, since *VeggieTales* creators Phil Vischer and Mike Nawrocki “made the rule early on that we wouldn’t portray Jesus as a vegetable” (p. 276). One wonders if David or Moses deserved similar consideration, but at least their Bible stories are made more accessible to children. Editors Schultze and Woods conclude with humility, offering a self-critical perspective, challenging the predictable and sometimes self-promoting nature of the media industry.

Overall, this reviewer came away from the book well-informed and amazed, not only by the size and scope of the multi-platform Empire of Evangelical media communications machinery, but also by this fair and even-handed reporting by many highly professional academic writers, covering the diverse plethora of tribal methods used to promote global faith in Christ. The only two major topics these editors may have been overlooked, and might hereby consider adding a chapter for future editions, are 1) the burgeoning world of evangelical academic and textbook publishing, to include college texts, Sunday school and children’s books, and those empowering the home-school movement, and 2) the innovative

“new-media” methods of Evangelical political action committees and pro-faith groups to lobby the government for passage of Christian laws.

Understanding Evangelical Media should become a mandatory textbook and library edition for all Universities and students majoring in Christian or Evangelical communications, media, television, radio, publishing, arts and entertainment. The highly readable book can also inform all who wonder how deeply the culture has been (and can be) positively impacted for Christ, through any of these mass communications tools, industries, and strategies.

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The Triumph of God Over Evil: Theodicy for a World of Suffering, by William Hasker. Downers Grove, ILL: IVP Academic, 2008.
228 pp. pb. \$20.00. ISBN13: 978-0830828043

Reviewed by Bradford McCall

William Hasker (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh) is professor emeritus of philosophy at Huntington College in Huntington, Indiana. His other books include *Metaphysics: Constructing a World View; God, Time, and Knowledge; Middle Knowledge: Theory and Applications* (edited with David Basinger and Eef Dekker) and *Providence, Evil and the Openness of God*. This new title "seeks to provide a justifying reason for the existence of the evil in the world" (20). He here explores a full range of issues concerning the problem of evil (theodicy), and shows why the evil existent in the world does not provide evidence of a moral fault in God, the world's creator and governor. This is an important assertion, for theologians must attempt to rectify the existence of an omnipotent, wholly good God with the existence of evil.

The first chapter explains the nature of the problem of evil, and details various strategies of how to deal with it. As such, it gives the grounds for the debate that follows, and sketches a version of Christian theism. The second, "Does Auschwitz Change Everything?," takes a look at the Holocaust primarily, and other acts of incomprehensible evil secondarily, in order to assert that even in view of such monstrosities, the love and justice of God is still intact in society. In so doing, he evaluates John Roth and D. Z. Phillips approaches to God and evil, and finds both of them lacking. In chapter three, Hasker debunks the notion that the presence of God and evil are logically incompatible with one another, using Plantinga's classic argument as his source.

In the fourth chapter, Hasker turns to creation in order to ask what a doctrine of it might say about the relation of God with evil. Interestingly, he herein notes that there are three available options for orthodox views on God's foreknowledge: 1) theological determinism (as highlighted in hyper-Calvinism and neo-

Thomism); 2) middle knowledge (as derived from Molinism); and 3) an openness view (as highlighted in Open Theism), and he 'openly' promotes the later (he is no friend of middle knowledge theory!). Moreover, he interacts with the arguments of Leibniz, Rowe, and Adams regarding the nature of this world. He suggests that God does not dictate a particular possible 'world' but instead chooses a world 'type', which allows for the process of cosmic evolution to insert its own proverbial input on how the world turns out, which is a manifestation of grace and generosity (100).

Hasker develops a theodicy of evil in chapter five, examining whether the world is 'cruel'. This fifth chapter constitutes the longest chapter, and provides Hasker's most lasting contributions, in my opinion. In it, he gives various reasons why God – a maximally excellent entity – would bring into existence a world such as the one we inhabit, one filled with disease, disorder, and disarray. Here Hasker interacts with Dembski, Morris, and Polkinghorne, before positing a response that is heavily dependent upon van Inwagen. He suggests several 'structural features' of the universe that are desirable in a divinely created world, and shows how these attributes are represented in our world. He explains how these features, though desirable, also invariably create a great deal of suffering.

The sixth chapter is a presentation of a free-will theodicy of moral evil, highlighting the inherent value of choice, which reveals Hasker's preference for a liberation view of free-will, as well as Hasker's critique of Plantinga's theodicy. In the seventh chapter, Hasker responds to the question of "Shouldn't God Be Doing More?" to prevent the apparently pointless evils that everywhere surround mortals in the twenty-first century. The climax of the title is in the final chapter, number eight, which highlights the already-onset-but-not-yet-consummated victory of God over evil. This last chapter is extremely crucial to the overall content of the title, for as Hasker writes, "a Christian response to the problem of evil should not be focused too exclusively on evil" (10).

In sum, I could see this title being used in philosophy courses that need an introductory text to the problem of evil. Pastors, who often face the need to explain why 'bad things happen to good people' (in so many words), also will find this resource valuable. He summarizes the issues of theodicy, both old and new, clearly and poignantly, all the while engaging with current philosophical thoughts regarding the subject in a judicious and fair manner. One minor criticism relates to the rather paltry index; I think Hasker's goal of an introductory text – of sorts – to the problem of evil would have been better served by a 'thick' index of terms, names, and so forth. This reservation aside, I would suggest the purchase of this title.

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