

Craig Van Gelder, editor. *Confident Witness—Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Ave. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503, 1999, 313 pp., \$24*

– Reviewed by Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.*

Does the traditional distinction between evangelism at home and missions abroad still hold? The contributors to this volume emphatically say No. As the subtitle of this work suggests, we must "rediscover the gospel" in North America. The present volume gathers the materials from a 1996 conference for which an ecumenical group of scholars and practitioners was assembled to address the issue of North America as a mission field.

Reading this volume, one is immediately struck with the almost total absence of Scripture from the discussion (the notable exception is an article on 1 Peter by D. Devadatta). The danger of this procedure is a lack of checks and balances, so that human assertions are made without being properly subjected to biblical teaching. An example of this is the claim by D. J. Hall that we have "grossly exaggerated all the triumphal language of the Bible," and that it "was not Jesus who invented the imagery of the 'mighty army' " (p. 74). But what about the Great Commission, where Jesus asserted, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth"? As P. Borgen plausibly suggests, the image in mind here may be that of a victorious military general issuing to his followers a charge of spiritual conquest while assuring them of his unlimited authority. Jesus' statement that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church likewise seems to have similar import.

The fact that the work is an ecumenical product and that not all the contributors are theologically trained raises further concerns. W. C. Hobbs, for example, strenuously argues against the notion of biblical inerrancy, repeatedly calling it syncretistic (because based on Aristotelian reasoning) (pp. 100–101). The Roman Catholic S. Bevans advocates a "contextual theology," in which not only Scripture and Tradition but also context become a "theological source": "Revelation is also encountered in the midst of human life, in human history, in human experience" (p. 142).

There are delightful and highly informative pieces such as the editor's own "Reading Postmodern Culture through the Medium of Movies" or R. J. Mouw's engagingly written and insightful introductory piece on the missionary location of the North American churches. While the underlying thesis of the volume is doubtless true, the suggested solutions should be subjected to further scrutiny. Also, I am not sure if the distinction between evangelism and mission should be too hastily obliterated.

Check these titles:

Hesselgrave, D. J. "Third Millennium Missiology and the Use of Egyptian Gold." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42/4 (December 1999).

Hunsberger, George R. and Craig Van Gelder, eds. *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1996)

Köstenberger, A. J. and P. T. O'Brien. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission, NSBT* (Leicester, U.K./Grand Rapids: IVP/ Eerdmans, forthcoming).

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