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Pat Robertson: A Personal, Political and Religious Portrait (Book Review)

Nick Van Til
Dordt College

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sheep, and the new denomination grew, slowly but solidly.

Many of the issues which led to the formation of the O.P.C. are still with us. All true Calvinists can benefit from the insights and message of this book. As we approach the twenty-first century and the third millennium we cannot afford to forget! This would also be an excellent book to give or recommend to those adults who are joining the church, and want to understand more of our reformed background.

Pressing Toward the Mark consists of thirty essays written by leaders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for the fiftieth anniversary of that denomination in 1986. At the end of the volume there is also a bibliography of the works of J. Gresham Machen, including also a record of reprints and translations up to 1984.

Of the three books here reviewed, this one is the heavyweight. It shows that biblically-directed learning is still strong in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It reflects upon a variety of topics which should be of interest to all Calvinist pastors and elders, whether they belong to that denomination or not.

The essay portion of the book is divided into four parts. In the first part there are seven essays reflecting upon the foundations for historic presbyterianism, including valuable contributions by Richard C. Gamble on "Presbyterianism and the Ancient Church" and "Distinctive

Emphases in Presbyterian Church Polity" by Edmund P. Clowney.

The second part deals with the American Presbyterian experience. It covers well the experience and controversies which arose prior to the 1930's.

The third part give perspectives on the issues which led to the formation of the O.P.C., and the turmoils of its early years. Mark Noll writes on "The Spirit of Old Princeton and the Spirit of the O.P.C." D. Clair Davis discusses "Machen and Liberalism." George Marsden supplies "Perspective on the Division of 1937." But it is not all a matter of doctrine unrelated to people. David W. Kiester has written an excellent piece on "The Life and Death of a Dakota Church" which helps the reader sense what the struggle was like when it was translated into the life of a particular congregation.

In the fourth part there are several essays discussing the mission and current issues now facing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The problems and opportunities of the mission fields are explored well.

This is an excellent volume, and deserves a wide reading. *Pressing Toward the Mark* summons all of us to consider anew our calling in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to understand more fully what the Apostolic faith means, and the suffering it sometimes involves.

C.S. Lewis and His World. David Barratt. London, England/Grand Rapids, Michigan: Marshall Pickering/William B. Eerdmans, 1987, 46 pp. Reviewed by Lorna Van Gilst, Instructor in English.

David Barratt provides the perfect resource for the person who wants a quick overview of the personal and literary life of C.S. Lewis. A forty-six page volume obviously limits the scope of the C.S. Lewis world, but attractive full-color or sepia photographs, which appear on nearly every page, greatly expand the setting.

Barratt draws from a wide variety of primary and secondary sources to recreate the world of the still-popular Oxbridge scholar, but he tells us little that is new to the Lewis devotee. However, he skillfully weaves biography through overviews and criticisms of Lewis' fifty volumes of fiction, allegory, literary criticism, and apologetics.

"Lewis is best at commending literature, less certain in criticizing it," says Barratt (140), who in turn commends Lewis with more certainty than he criticizes. Barratt presents Lewis as a "supremely confident writer" (41) whose perception of myth and metaphor, whose invention of pro-

foundly powerful images filled lecture halls with students and inspired their love for literature.

By contrast, Barratt exposes the writer Lewis' tendency to argue dialectically, reducing the logic to black-and-white-solutions and even failing to sufficiently ground his arguments in the Bible. In addition, Barratt acknowledges Lewis's male-dominated focus and his questionable views on limbo and purgatory. But he criticizes with the respect of a Lewis admirer who recognizes the scholar's ability to write profound concepts in layman's language, again largely through the use of images and analogies.

C.S. Lewis and His World offers the reader a credible view of an incredible writer who shares with his readers his capacity to doubt, to struggle, to long, to mourn, and through it all, to realize the joy of embracing the Christian faith.

Pat Robertson: A Personal, Political and Religious Portrait. David Edwin Harrell, Jr. San Francisco, California: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988, 246 pp., \$15.95. Reviewed by Nick R. Van Til, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy.

Following an extended discussion of the TV ministries and ministers, the March 18, 1988, issue of *Christianity To-*

day furnishes "a selective, annotated bibliography" by Quentin J. Schultze of the Calvin College Communications

Department. Schultze rates the "authorized biography" of Pat Robertson by John B. Donovan as "long on description and short on analysis." The biography by Neil Eskelin, an employee of Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, Schultze rates as "inspirational but superficial." Harrell's biography, herein under discussion, Schultze rates as a "valuable study with limited analysis of CBN" (CT p. 41).

One would scarcely expect an unbiased book on the life of Pat Robertson by an employee of CBN such as Neil Eskelin. Nor would one expect an unbiased approach by someone associated with People for the American Way as, for example, its very vocal president, The Reverend John Buchanan. As Chairman of the History Department at the University of Alabama, David Edwin Harrell, Jr., comes with more reliable credentials and proves himself equal to the task of furnishing a highly objective view of the life of Robertson and those influences which have fashioned the basic ideas that Robertson espouses.

If Harrell gives somewhat less space to the discussion of Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, his CBN, than some critics of the media ministries might wish, it is because he wants to cover adequately those influences which have formed the Pat Robertson whom we recently saw on the campaign trail seeking the Republican nomination for the United States presidency. I think Harrell has done that job very well.

Instead of spending time on the question of Robertson's premarital sex life and his disputed Korean War service, Harrell analyzes such concepts as Christianity, evangelicalism, fundamentalism, charismatics, premillennial dispensationalism, and extrabiblical revelation. He does this because they as religious tenets are the deposit upon which Robertson draws to form his political philosophy. That kind of treatment does much more to enlighten the reader than those personal activities which the popular media have tried to sensationalize.

It is interesting to note that Robertson received his introduction to charismatics from Reverend Harold Bredesen of the First Reformed Church of Mt. Vernon, New York, where Robertson served briefly as assistant pastor. Presumably, it was there that Robertson received the gift of tongues, Bredesen having been a prior recipient. Upon invitation, those two, and a third party, spent an evening with Mrs. Norman Vincent Peale for the purpose of demonstrating their gifts. That interest by Mrs. Peale led eventually to the publication of the little volume *They Speak In Other Tongues* by John H. Sherrill, a staff writer for *Guideposts*, the Peale magazine.

In discussing Robertson's past claims to extrabiblical revelations Harrell quotes from the comments of George Marsden as "one of the most penetrating critiques of Robertson as a political candidate." Concerning Robertson's claims to extrabiblical revelation Marsden wrote, "Once in office someone who thinks he has such powers would certainly want to draw on those powers in times of crisis. The results could be disastrous" (p. 123).

Secular publicists such as the satirical columnists Art Buchwald and Mike Royko and the cartoonist G.B. Trudeau have had their heyday ridiculing Robertson's

claim to direct word from God and direct answers to prayers. More restrained, Harrell offers this comment:

A theology founded on the rapturous leading of the Lord opens itself to an endless parade of self-proclaimed prophets and exotic revelations (p. 126).

A president's commitment to premillennial dispensationalism might also have far reaching implications. It could be a real threat to a reasoned and reasonable foreign policy as it pertains to the Israeli-Arab conflicts. It seems to have a strong influence on Robertson's views concerning Zionism. For example, the Six Day War of 1967 erupted the same day that ground was broken for the new CBN facility at Portsmouth. That was taken by Robertson as a "direct sign from God." In 1975 Robertson made four trips to Israel.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's Robertson repeatedly explored the twentieth-century significance of the prophecies of Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah, Isaiah and other prophets of the Old and New Testaments. Among other things, he concluded that he would "be alive when Jesus Christ comes back to earth" (p. 145).

I think the fact that Robertson was the only presidential hopeful who conferred with Itzaak Shamir in his March (1988) visit to the United States is noteworthy. The fact that Shamir would take time for such a conference indicates that Shamir is quite cognizant of the fact that, as Harrell puts it, Israel is "dear" to fundamentalist dispensationalists. It is not hard to understand that such a prejudice could give Robertson a distorted and myopic view of Israeli-Arab relations and the United States interests therein. In the "Prologue" to his book, *Kingdoms in Conflict*, Charles Colson gives us a scenario for the kind of conflict of interest a president's dispensationalism might present. It is alarming, to say the least. It seems to me only an ardent charismatic and/or dispensationalist follower of Robertson could avoid considering the hazard that those views would present if held by the occupant of the Oval Office.

The publishers could hardly have anticipated that Robertson's star would have faded from the political sky so soon. With that decline no doubt there will be a commensurate loss of interest in Robertson's life and views. Be that as it may, this book still remains worthwhile reading because of the insights it furnishes into the aggregate of beliefs which make up the views of a Robertson type candidate. That, and as the author suggests, the fact that Robertson is not too old for another try.

All Christians should be interested in getting American politics and American life turned around to a respect for Judeo-Christian morality and values. Billy Graham suggested concerning Jimmy Carter's candidacy that being a "born-again" Christian in and by itself did not qualify one to be president of our country. It may well be that a strong dispensationalism in and by itself is also enough to disqualify one for the presidential office.