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## Reclaiming the Land: A Study of the Book of Joshua (Book Review)

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paralyzed by a "tranquilizing utopian vision" but should, instead, be characterized by "an eschatological urge to action" (201). Fearful of severing sanctification from justification, he pointedly maintains, while referring to 1 Peter 2:24, that "walking in the footsteps of the Lord is not an addendum, but is embraced by him whose healing comes through being crucified and dead to sin and alive to righteousness" (251).

Basically, Berkouwer continues to think in terms of the perspective that H. Bavinck and A. Kuyper articulated prior to him at the Free University. Of A. Kuyper, Berkouwer writes that, back in the nineteenth century, Kuyper, "shocked at the enormous dangers of his own time," refused to resort to "an escapist apocalypticism" and that, instead, he warned "the church against world-flight." "His warnings," Berkouwer continues, "were so strong, in fact, that he was accused of secularizing Christianity. He was said to have 'de-schatologized' the faith" (181).

Berkouwer has been accused of the same thing. That is his honor and contribution. It makes close reading of this fascinating book as well as critical reflection upon it so eminently challenging and profitable for any serious student of the Reformed faith and of theology in general.

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**Reclaiming the Land. A Study of the Book of Joshua** by Don Sinnema, Curriculum Development Centre, Toronto, Ontario, 1977. 95 pages, \$2.50 paperbound. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Associate Professor in Theology and Philosophy.

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For a number of years, Don Sinnema—a 1969-graduate of Dordt College—has been making a historical and systematic study of the genius of Reformed theology, of the nature and role of faith, and of the essence and function of Scripture. The fruitfulness of such a study is clearly evident in this small but delightful book.

In consort with members of the Curriculum Development Centre in Toronto, Sinnema shuns all intellectualistic and atomistic interpretations of Scriptural revelation and seeks to recapture, especially for students of junior high school and up, the excitement of genuine listening to and appropriating the riches of God's Word.

This 95-page student manual is the first in a series of guides dealing with God's redemptive revelation in the Old Testament books from Joshua through II Kings. After his beautiful introduction, "The Promise of a Land of Rest," the author discusses the four parts of the book of

Joshua: "Yahweh leads Israel into the Land" (1:1-5:12), "Yahweh Leads Israel in Reclaiming the Land by the Ban" (5:13-12:24), "Yahweh Distributes the Land" (13:1-22:34), and "Yahweh Consolidates His Rule Over the Land of Rest" (23:1-24:33).

What makes Sinnema's understanding and explanation of *Joshua* so fascinating is his uncanny ability to make this part of the Old Testament come alive. The focus is not on a few, isolated moral lessons to be derived from certain peculiar military and cultic events. Sinnema has concentrated instead on showing how *Joshua* forms an integral part of the cosmic drama of the redemption God provided when He carved out for himself a people of His own.

By means of simple but penetrating comments, helpful drawings and maps (provided by Katherine Blomberg, Partners in Print), and clear suggestions (provided by Jean Olthuis and Anne Tuininga) for pedagogically meaningful student activities—for example, puppet shows, war communiqués, designing flags, responsive readings, making murals, and writing scripts—the author makes it possible for the student to sense something of the covenantal sweep of this revelation, the radical nature of salvation, the holiness of God's love, and the cosmic scope of true rest. The purpose throughout this study is to indicate how a part of creation, namely, the land of Canaan, begins to function as a beachhead of freedom and rest recaptured from the captivity and turmoil of sin.

The spirit and purpose of this book is clearly expressed by the author in his *Foreword*: "One more thing to remember: the Bible isn't like an old newspaper—stale news on yellowing pages. The purpose of the Bible is to speak to our hearts and build up our faith; it paints the sweeping picture of God's painstaking work in renewing his whole creation. The book of Joshua tells us about a very real part of God's redeeming efforts. In this book you will meet God in action. You will get a clearer picture of who God is and what he expects from you as his son or daughter" (p. 5).

As a guide that enables us to hear the Word of the Lord more distinctly, I strongly recommend this book (and the accompanying 116-page "Teacher and Study Group Edition") for instructional purposes in schools and for devotional activities at home and in Bible discussion groups. We are greatly indebted to Sinnema for writing this book and to the Curriculum Development Centre for assisting in its publication. Considering the excellent quality of this *first* publication in a series of guides on several books of the Old Testament, we can hardly wait for other books in this series to appear.