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Models of Religious Broadcasting (Book Review)

Martin Dekkenga

Dordt College

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Marston and Forster in God's Strategy in Human History present an Arminian view of the history of redemption. The radical nature of man's Fall into sin is not an element in this study. Instead, God, in His perfect foreknowledge, determined to redeem those who repented. Election, in the authors' view, is conditional. "God ordains that the new heaven and earth will come. He does not ordain which particular individuals will accept his plan for them to have a part in it"(p. 28). Obviously, such a stance colors and shapes the whole study.

God's Strategy in Human History is an interesting and thought-provoking book. Many of the arguments presented may not be convincing, but they do spur the reader to a new and thorough study of the Scriptures.

Models of Religious Broadcasting—by J. Harold Ellens, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974, 168 pages, \$3.45. Reviewed by Martin Dekkenga, Assistant Professor of Speech.

This is a relatively short book, 168 pages, in paperback form. To set the stage for the book, which deals with various "models" of religious broadcasting, J. Harold Ellens presents a brief but concise history of broadcasting including both radio and television, with major emphasis on religious broadcasting. The book may be a little weak at this point because of the relatively small amount of space given to such a time span in our history. One would have to be quite familiar with broadcasting to follow well the material presented.

The "models" referred to earlier are dealt with at some length, and it is at this point that the book is strongest. The models of religious broadcasting Ellens discusses are: Pulpit--broadcasters using the camera and microphone as an extended pulpit; Spectacle--the use of camera and

microphone as tools to create a spectacle; Pedagogy--the use of the media to teach; and Leaven--the use of the media to provoke earnest thought.

In his review and analysis of the various models, Ellens presents the broadcasting effort of various religious leaders and organizations. The Pulpit model is best illustrated in the works of Bishop Sheen, The Lutheran Hour, the Back to God Hour, and others. These men and organizations use the radio basically for the "preaching" of the Word, not attempting to use varied format but rather to use a straight-forward preaching style.

The second model Ellens deals with is the Sinai or Spectacular model. Some of the better-known evangelists who employ this technique are Rex Humbard, Oral Roberts, and Billy Graham. The use of this technique depends on the strong personality of the individual and the fact that the broadcasting of religion must be theological in nature. And according to Ellens, "The religious broadcasting spectacle operates with the same limited view of the nature and behavior of God that Jesus opposed in Judaism, the view of Old Testament supernaturalism rather than New Testament incarnation" (p. 92).

Ellens shows a preference for the third model, Pedagogy, Electronic Education, or Instructional broadcasting. Several of the major denominations--including the United Church of Christ, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church--have made extensive use of documentaries, lectures, and dramas with religious significance. Ellens indicates that this model may be hard to distinguish from the Pulpit model, as it employs some closely related techniques. The Instructional model does not rely on the use of mood-setting music, and staging, lead-in, and introductions, as do many of the Pulpit models. It does rely on the "lecture-homily teaching of Christian ideas and theological concepts" (p. 97).

A fourth model favored by Ellens is the "Leaven" model, which makes use of commercial spots inserted into regular pro-

gramming, which provide the viewer and listener with a brief, but apparently effective, encounter with the claims of God. Along with the use of commercial spots is the use of well-known religious personalities in talk shows such as Johnny Carson, David Frost, and Dick Cavett.

Of the four models presented by Ellens, he concludes that the future success of religious broadcasting lies in the Instructional and Leaven models. Although he confesses that "Spots, interviews, life-situations drama, and documentaries may not teach much theology well, they may be the only chance" (p. 139).

Models of Religious Broadcasting is an excellent little book on the religious broadcasting techniques used today. Ellens gives a careful analysis of each of the techniques and the problems each presents. Except for the first two chapters, this book makes interesting reading.

A Personal Adventure in Prophecy,

by Raymond McFarland Kincheloe. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1974. 214 pages. Cloth \$4.95; paper \$2.95. Reviewed by Wayne Kobes, Instructor in Theology.

Bible commentators have always approached the Book of Revelation with some hesitation, being aware of the complexity of interpretation and of the variety of views which previous interpreters have held. Raymond Kincheloe in this book attempts to guide his readers into a fuller understanding of the principles of biblical interpretation so that the Book of Revelation can be clearly understood. Kincheloe's book is therefore better understood as a study guide than as a commentary on Revelation.

At the beginning Kincheloe makes clear his basic starting points in his study. He believes that Scripture was written to be understood, that each book has a message

for modern man as well as for the original readers, and that the Bible is verbally inspired and fully authoritative. In addition, he clearly states that his treatment of Revelation is from a premillenarian, modified-futuristic viewpoint. Yet Kincheloe affirms that it is not his intention to impose his interpretations on his readers.

However, I have no intentions of forcing my views upon the unsuspecting reader. My main objective is to encourage the reader to become an independent investigator of truth. (p. ix)

With his purpose clearly articulated, Kincheloe sets down basic principles of interpretation. He calls on his readers to look for the basic structure of the book under study. It is refreshing to find a writer encouraging his readers first to put aside all their commentaries and carefully to listen to the book itself. Kincheloe instructs his readers to begin by reading the entire book at one sitting, trying to find the structure by which the author arranged the material. And just how does one uncover this structure? Kincheloe writes:

...a new day dawned when I discovered that each of the sixty-six books could be approached in a methodical way; that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can find the actual viewpoint of the author; that this viewpoint reveals the author's basic pattern; and that the composition of the books of the Bible follows the same basic laws and yields to the same structural analyses as any other kind of writing. (p. viii)

The author goes on to list various "laws of relationship" between paragraphs and sections of the book. However, the reader may find some of these to be less than helpful, and even "forced."

In the rest of the book Kincheloe applies these principles specifically to the book of Revelation, guiding the reader chapter by chapter. It is striking that after asserting that the books of Scripture