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Bellinger's "Jesus v. abortion: They know not what they do." (Book Review)

James Sauer

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his descendants, the nation of Israel. Esau was perceived as a threat to Jacob just as his descendants, Edom, were considered a threat to Israel. Many nations could have threatened Israel, but only Edom threatened Israel's very sense of identity as God's chosen people. The struggle between Edom and Israel was not a struggle like any other, but a tension between brother nations profoundly connected to Israel's sense of self-identity. Extending beyond biblical times to the Roman Empire and to Christianity as threats to Israel's identity as God's chosen people, the representation of Edom persists. Dr. Assis ably guides the reader into understanding the theology and ideology that stands behind the expansive repercussions of this Bible story, exposing its key messages, which are as relevant today as they were in antiquity. His exegesis is based on both Jewish and Christian scholarship and is extensively cited, as befits a scholarly text. It would be helpful for the reader to have some understanding of Hebrew, Hebrew poetics, and documentary hypothesis to get the most from this extraordinary scholarly work.

Reviewer

Tami Echavarria Robinson, Whitworth University.

Bellinger, C.K. (2016). *Jesus v. abortion: They know not what they do*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books. 340pp. \$66.00. ISBN 9781498235051

Reason can be a spiritual weapon. Charles Bellinger has delivered a magisterial philosophic exposition for the pro-life worldview. He offers a big picture approach with big ideas. The text is erudite; and it is not for the casual or popular reader. His intellectual audience is threefold: pro-choice advocates, the people in the "muddled middle" who do not think clearly about abortion, and the pro-lifers who he does not have to convince, but who can be helped by his thorough analysis.

The text is divided into four sections, each section with four to eight essays, and each essay addressing an anthropological, philosophic, linguistic, or theological issue, often centered on major thinkers like Kierkegaard, Richard Weaver, or Eric Vogelin, no lightweights. Part 1 deals with violence in the human condition and the employment of human rights language. Part 2 touches upon general intellectual arguments. Part 3 rehearses the intellectual and legal elements of abortion. Part 4 suggests a proposal for a humane Christian strategy for seeking converts toward the rejection of abortive violence.

The argument presented is that human nature is inherently violent. The language of human rights is a rational element we use to restrain it. Generally, pro-choice reasoning is flawed with their assertion of an unrestrained human willfulness negating the humanity of the weak fetus. We must move toward what Bellinger calls “the Center of things,” a place of philosophic moral balance “made possible by the deep and subtle influence of Jesus of Nazareth on Western intellectual history” (p. 64). Pro-choice advocates have entered into a civil war with reality, sacrificing first the infant, and then their own innocence and reason. Finally, conversion is possible from the pro-abortion position, as the story of the prodigal son illustrates; and that the pro-life witness should be as philosophically sophisticated as possible, but with the understanding that insights and arguments should be employed with the goal of meeting people where they are and drawing them forward into the richness of the dimensions of reality. The concern must be to win the person, not the argument (p. 283).

That is no small task.

Irenic though these sentiments appear, they illustrate the problem of using rational argumentation in this or any book in the abortion debate. The pro-abortion position is an article of faith. Dark hearts do not hear spiritual arguments. There is a veil over the eyes of the modern mind. Though some prodigal sons may be swayed by its painstaking philosophic analysis to move toward the “center of things,” we are really giving witness to the spiritually blind, the willfully ignorant, those resistant to the Spirit, and frankly, to people committed to the oppression of the weak. A task that needs to be done.

Bellinger has done great service in marshalling a worldview argument against the pro-choice position. But we are possessed as a culture by the demon-lust of Moloch, and such devils, as Jesus said in another context, do not come out except with “prayer and fasting.” Still, he has restored Jesus to the abortion debate to remind us that when Christ called on men to “suffer the little children to come to me,” it was not a request for baby body parts. Perhaps Bellinger has planted the seminal argument for the rebirth of reason and mercy in the mind of the academy.

Reviewer

James L. Sauer, Eastern University