

America is not it. Contrary to popular belief, America was not founded on God's covenant with European settlers (replicating Abraham) but on the sacrificial slaughter of Native peoples (akin to Cain).

If America is a babelic empire, then it must not simply reorganize into God's imperium. Rather, following the deuteronomistic history, the way out of babelic existence is to be scattered by Yahweh—not so much God's imperium as God's decolonization.

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Bruce Ellis Benson, Malinda Elizabeth Berry, and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, eds. *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012.

“Prophetic evangelicals are called to lead the church as the *ekklesia* of *shalom*—the discipleship community of equals who bear witness to Christ's just and peaceable kingdom in and for the whole world” (48). The editors of this book use the adjective *prophetic* to describe an emerging identity of Christians who at some point in time self-identified as evangelicals but, given current American political and social contexts, are uneasy with that qualifier alone. “Prophetic” seems to offer a qualifier of evangelical faith that allows people a way of maintaining evangelical identity while also working for issues of peace and justice. The editors have set out to engage conversation, mostly with American academics from a variety backgrounds who have struggled with, or are struggling with, the essence of evangelical identity and their place within such an identity in a polarized context that puts Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis in tension with each other.

The fundamental question that this book explores is how sound Christian belief informs and shapes sound Christian practice in the context within which a community engages life. As the above quotation states it, prophetic evangelicals are those who define and critique their living in light

of Jesus' kingdom teachings on justice and peace for the well-being of the world. This, they argue, contrasts with mainstream American evangelicalism, which has allowed itself to be too closely identified and shaped by partisan, particularly Republican, political agendas.

The core of the volume is composed of twelve chapters by contributing authors who tell a little of their journey in faith and life, and then delve into a particular faith focus that can shape how to live in the world, such as creation, shalom, justice, resurrection, reconciliation, and the cross, to name just a few. Each looks at how life can be shaped through these particular lenses of doctrine that engage with real life pain, struggles, and joys, particularly of marginalized communities. The good news in each case is that deep suffering can be named, and that the hope of Jesus Christ is that healing, restoration, reconciliation, and peace can be experienced even in the midst of that suffering.

*Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom* could be a helpful resource for those who are wrestling with their identity as evangelical Christians. As well, it could offer them conversation partners from across the evangelical continuum who have also wrestled with, and found ways to hold/reclaim/re-engage, their spiritual heritage. This book could also be valuable for those whose spiritual identity is other than evangelical but would find in these writings conversation partners whom they may not have thought even existed, along with common ground upon which to build dialog and action for the common good.

Although the editors worked hard to be inclusive in gathering the essays presented in this volume, the overwhelming majority of the pieces reflects a fairly America-centric view. What would strengthen their global vision, as they stated it in the quotation cited above, is to include essays from self-identified evangelicals from various parts of the world. For example, both faculty and students at Bethlehem Bible College, an evangelical institution situated in Jesus' birthplace in Palestine, wrestle with how to incarnate Jesus' vision of peace, justice, and love of enemy under Israeli occupation and control of West Bank lands. Another example is that of some Philippine evangelical Christians, a minority sub-group within the Roman Catholic majority population, who are working at dialogue for peace with another minority group who have been in conflict with the Christian majority,

namely Muslims on the island of Mindanao. The inclusion of such voices would have enhanced the editors' aim of cultivating conversations of faith for a truly global vision of how communities of Jesus' followers are engaging God's shalom of reconciliation and transformation for the common good. Let the conversation broaden and grow.

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Christian Smith. *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012.

Evangelical sociologist Christian Smith is committed to the Bible as authoritative and divinely inspired, but argues that the biblicism of contemporary evangelicalism is untenable and should be replaced by a more faithful and life-giving way of reading scripture. Smith defines biblicism as a constellation of ten convictions: the Bible contains God's inerrant words; represents the totality of God's communication to humanity; covers all issues relevant to Christian life; is easily understood; is best read literally; can be understood without reference to church creeds, traditions, or hermeneutical frameworks; exhibits internal harmony; is universally applicable over time; covers all matters of Christian belief and practice; constitutes a handbook of inerrant teaching on matters of science, economics, health, politics, and even romance (4-5).

By marshaling evidence from books and statements of faith from websites of Christian organizations and seminaries, Smith seeks to demonstrate the pervasiveness of biblicism within evangelicalism. Like other reviewers, I wonder about Smith's definition. Certainly some evangelicals display the simplistic biblicism that he outlines, but others interpret the Bible in much more thoughtful and nuanced ways than those reflected by his definition.

The author argues that biblicism is untenable and inconsistent because