

"Listening to the Listeners," the author challenges preachers to get into the skin of their audiences and to solicit and covet feedback from them. He rounds out this section with two chapters on preaching about money, providing valuable tips on a sensitive subject around which not a few preachers would rather detour.

A strength of this book is the "Questions to Consider" and suggestions for additional reading with which each chapter ends. The questions make excellent fodder for classroom, collegial, or personal reflection, and the reading lists are rich resources for preachers who are sometimes so busy with parish responsibilities that they do not have time to stay abreast of the literature in the field. Another strength of the book is its size. As texts on biblical preaching go, this one is slim. *Making a Difference in Preaching* is only 158 pages. Yet Robinson succeeds in conveying a wealth of information in this brief book, deftly juxtaposing scholarship and his personal experience in the pulpit to provide preachers with useful tools to revive and energize their preaching. His mixture of theory and methodology is refreshingly incisive and instructive. Robinson reveals an understanding of, and resonance with, the concepts he shares, refusing to provide his readers with the pat answers and platitudes that nonpractitioners are prone to proffer. So compelling are the author's ideas and insights, and so cogent and concise his writing, that this reviewer read the book in one sitting.

Making a Difference in Preaching is a worthy addition to the literature in the field of preaching. Students and practitioners, both lay and paid, should find it immensely helpful as they struggle with the unending task of crafting biblical sermons that hit home. Few, if any, who buy or read this book will regret it.

Andrews University

R. CLIFFORD JONES

Rolston, Holmes, III. *Genes, Genesis and God: Values and Their Origins in Natural and Human History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 400 pp. Paperback, \$18.95.

Seeking to reconcile the divide between science and religion has become a popular sport among intellectuals. Recently published examples of this include *Rocks of Ages* by Stephen J. Gould (NY: Random House, 1998), *Seduced by Science* by Steven Goldberg (NY: New York University Press, 1999), and *The Sacred Depths of Nature* by Ursula Goodenough (NY: Oxford University Press, 1998). Into this morass Holmes Rolston III, University Distinguished Professor and Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University, has added his thoughts in *Genes, Genesis and God*. Material in this book was presented as the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh during 1997-1998. This is not the first time Rolston has published on the topic of science and religion, and many, but not all, of the ideas in *Genes, Genesis and God* can be found in his other books, including *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* and *Conserving Natural Value*. Rolston is also a prominent thinker in the arena of ethics and the environment, having published respected works on this topic, such as environmental ethics.

It is in the subtitle, "Values and Their Origins in Natural and Human History," that the book's actual subject matter is described. One has to wonder if the main title was chosen for marketing purposes or perhaps because of the natty

whimsy of its alliteration. This book has very little if anything to do with God, or at least what most people think of when they hear the word "God." Rolston essentially takes the current orthodoxy of evolutionary biology and then tries to whip up some feeling of reverent awe at the creative power of nature. He seems to be saying that the values commonly thought to emerge from religion are actually an emergent property of nature and thus the natural result of biological and cultural evolution. Unfortunately, the most that can be said is that he "seems to be saying" this, as the prose in *Genes, Genesis and God* could best be described as mind-numbing. For example, many words are dedicated to creating a fuzzy definition of the term "values." "Values" is used to mean not just moral values, but also the inherent values of biological systems and organisms, value of information in cells, and so on. Once the water has been muddied by redefining a word with a commonly understood meaning, the reader is assaulted with extended quotations from other authors, some of which provide welcome relief from the prose connecting one quote with the next.

Still, the paragraph-length quotations come so thick and fast that the reader is left constantly shifting mental gears between different writers' styles and the stuttering nature of the logic that skips from one author's thoughts to the next. There is an overriding logic to what is being said, but it takes constant effort to follow along and ultimately understand the fairly simple points being made. Readers who lose the general chain of the logic will remain lost unless they go back to where they last understood and figure out how that which comes after that point fits into the big picture. Ironically, this problem is most evident in the opening chapter, where Rolston lays out premises from which he works in subsequent chapters. Obviously this is not a book for the casual reader.

Rolston eliminates the supernatural from creation and leaves us with a muffled kind of neopanteism. The Creator is Nature, giving rise through her natural laws to the genesis of organisms and ultimately humans, who take the process even further through cultural evolution. In this "value"-added process, the engine of value genesis is genetic mutation and natural selection. To circumvent some of the difficulties that arise in this process, Rolston presents vague ideas about organisms acting as vessels for "genetic algorithm programs" that somehow solve the problem of survival (36). In invoking this type of general construct while ignoring the details of how the system being suggested could or does function, Rolston falls into a common trap of those arguing for creation or evolution, the offering of a "what-if" solution instead of a "thus-is" solution in which specific data and actual examples are given.

Genes, Genesis and God may be of some value to those who are looking for a collection of perspectives dealing with the origin of complexity and morality. There are many excellent quotations and some ideas that one would be unlikely to encounter in the normal course of textbook or scientific journal reading. By avoiding critical evaluation of current dogma in science, Rolston shows that when one attempts to unite incompatible ideas about the nature and purpose of life that are held in science and religion, the common denominator that remains is pantheism. Perhaps this book could provide something along the lines of a feeling of wonder to those who do not question in any way the evolution

paradigm, but for those who choose the more difficult but interesting path of questioning current ideas and critiquing dogma, this book is of limited value.

Andrews University

TIMOTHY G. STANDISH

Sider, Ronald J. *Just Generosity*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 272 pp. Paperback, \$9.59.

Ron Sider is the president of Evangelicals for Social Action and professor of theology and culture at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary at St. David, Pennsylvania. Recognized as a major voice of conscience in and beyond evangelical circles, Sider is best known for his previous book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*.

To some, Sider's latest book will seem parochial as he expresses his concern for the thirty-five million Americans living below the poverty line, when there are two billion people who would count American poor as unimaginably comfortable, if not wealthy. But this is an important and even prophetic American book for an American audience.

In chapter 1 Sider describes the problem: the gross economic inequalities found in the most affluent nation on earth. This is made even more graphic by numerous tables, figures, and anecdotes. Sider is careful to note alternative views before he argues persuasively against them. He goes on in the second chapter to call upon American Christians to restructure a society which may or may not want to be restructured. He is seeking a subculture that will practice more just and biblical economics.

Sider presents a balanced biblical picture, keeping personal freedom in proper perspective to human communal nature and sense of responsibility. He notes that "completely equal economic outcomes are not compatible with human freedom" (52). This is not done in a simplistic, proof-texting manner but by identifying biblical principles within their contexts and then applying them.

Chapter 3, "A Comprehensive Strategy," persuasively outlines a strategic cooperation between government, big business, civil society (including religious organizations), the media, and educational institutions to renew a moral and just society that offers supportive, transformative, and integrated programs. This is continued in the succeeding chapters. Sider calls for broad cooperation to recapture the moral soul of the country (115, 116).

All of this, however, is a biblical call in a postbiblical, postmodern society that is all the more stirring and needed at a time when it is all too easy for Christians to blend into the cultural woodwork in a society of conspicuous consumption. To illustrate the feasibility of his vision, Sider names and describes, at some length, four large corporations founded and operated on Christian principles that have been successful both from human and financial viewpoints.

Chapters 5-7 are reasoned calls for strengthening homes and educational and health systems along biblical principles. Sider does not call for the conversion of society, but for Christians to demonstrate that biblical principles are good for all of society, and all of us benefit by reversing the neglect of the poor among us.

Readers will appreciate the thoroughness of Sider's book, exploring various sides of issues and offering reasonable, achievable, and moral solutions to the