

Jesus v. Evangelicals: A Biblical Critique of a Wayward Movement by Constantine R. Campbell. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2023. xi + 244 pp., paper, \$19.99.

Anyone who is familiar with the books written by Constantine Campbell, as this reviewer is, will be disappointed by his latest work. When meeting a noted scholar like Campbell at a conference, as this reviewer has a few times, the last thing that comes to mind is his political views and one could wish it stayed that way. Campbell is professor and associate research director at the Sydney College of Divinity in Australia. He previously served as professor of New Testament Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and senior lecturer in New Testament at Moore Theological College in Sydney. He is also the associate editor of the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.

Campbell is a well-known Greek scholar with an impressive writing resume. His writings on Greek verbal aspect and his interaction with Stanley Porter and Buist Fanning on the subject are fascinating. His book *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) won the *Christianity Today* Book of the Year Award. Most recently, he authored the new volume on Ephesians in the Eerdmans Pillar series to replace the one by Peter O'Brien that was withdrawn due to allegations of plagiarism. Now there is *Jesus v. Evangelicals*.

Campbell, who no longer considers himself an evangelical, sees evangelicalism as having three major strands. Theological evangelicals are "evangelical by conviction," cultural evangelicals "have adopted a way of life, community, and worship that has been informed by theological evangelicalism," and political evangelicals "share a set of political commitments that have come to be known as evangelical" (p. 5). Many evangelicals "will fit in two or all three" (p. 5). The problem as Campbell sees it is that evangelicalism's "cultural influence" and "political nature" have overshadowed its "theological heritage" (p. 4). Therein lies the foundation of Campbell's problems with evangelicalism: he is a cultural and political leftist, which was apparent from his five favorable references to Jim Wallis in the first chapter of the book. Campbell's issue with evangelicalism is not a theological one, although one may note that he is thankful that the statement on premillennialism "has been expunged from the EFCA's statement of faith" (p. 75).

In his introduction, Campbell articulated his criticisms of evangelicals and evangelicalism: it has become too politicized; it tends to have an "us verses them" mentality; it suffers from the perception and

reality of judgmentalism; it is often highly divisive; it has an understood code of acceptable and unacceptable sins; it too harshly treats marriage failure, divorce, and remarriage; it celebrates potentially unhealthy church models; it has been overrun by those peddling false gospels; and, the term *evangelical* no longer means what it once did. Campbell devoted a chapter to each of his criticisms, with the final chapter also serving as a summary and conclusion.

While Campbell did occasionally make some valid points, the book reads more like *Campbell v. Evangelicals*. His disdain for Donald Trump and evangelicals who criticize voting Democratic is evident throughout his work. He took issue with evangelicalism on guns, gay marriage, homosexuality, transgenderism, and critical race theory. Campbell appears bitter for how he was treated by evangelicals when his marriage failed and he divorced and remarried. Not only does he have an entire chapter on the subject, but also he mentioned his divorce several other places in the book. One gets the impression that this is what sowed the seeds of the book. Whatever just criticism that Campbell levies at evangelicalism is marred by his Democratic talking points throughout the book. The only chapter of the book that I can be wholeheartedly recommended is chapter 7, "Megaperch Pastors." He faults megachurch culture for being "theologically light and relationally superficial" and "consumerist, celebrity driven, and entertainment based" (p. 149). He faults megachurches for employing multisite platforms and video preaching (p. 149); and, he faults megachurch pastors for tending to be theologically undereducated "performers who rely on rhetorical skills, charisma, and stand-up comedy to engage, captivate, and enthrall their audiences" (p. 163). One is puzzled as to why Campbell included chapter 8, "The Lunatic Fringe," since Paula White, Kenneth Copeland, and Joel Osteen are so far removed from traditional evangelicalism. How disappointing that Zondervan would publish *Jesus v. Evangelicals*, which cannot be recommended to anyone. However, this reviewer does recommend most of Campbell's other books and look forward to any Greek or theological works that he may write in the future.

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