

Your Letters

Editor's Note: Starting this issue we are printing your letters. We welcome your feedback on anything related to IJFM!

Dear [Editors],

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I am a long time subscriber and our organization helped with one issue regarding oral communication of the Bible. Your issue: Volume 18, Number 1-Spring 2001 was very practical, easy to understand and interesting! We have been active and supporting nationals in India for several years so I read the articles with great interest and at one sitting. Very unusual.

If you are able to keep this kind of writing and not allow this publica-

tion to become a bully-pulpit for a few, I think (hope) you should find increases in readership.

I also appreciated that: "The contributions to this issue are the sole responsibility of the authors." This allowed differences of style and left me with the feeling that I was getting straight scoop, not articles that were doctored by someone who filtered what the author of an article/experience wanted to say. It also gave respect to the authors somewhat along the line that the articles in this issue called for, namely; respect for another and laying aside a perceived superiority. . . .

Jerry Jackson, President
Hosanna

Dear Editors,

Kudos for the article by Malcolm Hunter: *The Omega Connection* [20:1]. I rejoiced and said AMEN throughout the article. The Church is a wonderful mystery of God that He alone brings to life and uses to reach every tribe, tongue, people and nation with the glorious gospel. I resonated with the concepts and statements of Malcolm Hunter. As a missionary church planter and as a mission executive who must work the machinery of missions it is my passion to see church planting movements established among all the peoples of the earth. Thank you for this excellent article.

Sincerely, Frank Severn
General Director, Send International

God's Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science

By Kenneth J. Howell, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. 2002, 319 pp., ISBN 0268010455

—Reviewed by Ralph D. Winter



The "ism" in Copernicanism resulted when people like Calvin and Luther condemned the heliocentric theory advanced by Copernicus as contrary to scripture. Copernicus in his defense spoke of "God's Two Books" of revelation, the one His handiwork, the other His Word. Many of the early scholars interested in astronomy took the Bible literally when it said, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard (Psalms 19:1-3, NIV)." And, in those early days almost everyone accepted the authority of the Bible. Both sides insisted that they were faithful to scripture.

It seems to me, however, that the idea of two books virtually equally authoritative and from God, speaking two quite different languages, would have virtually predicted difficulties of reconciliation between the two, and worse still, tended to establish two, no longer one, final authority. This was even worse, it seems to me, than the Copernican theory itself.

In any case until recently very little study has been given to this issue by historians of theology. Most writing has been done by historians of science. Howell's book aims to correct that imbalance with his intensive study of the 1500 to 1700 period within which Copernicus' revival of the heliocentric ideas of the ancient Aristarchus went from disbelief to wide acceptance, due considerably to Kepler's demonstration of the amenability of natural law to mathematical description.

With few attempting to do so before him, Howell's work of 326 pages is quite ground breaking. One is surprised by many things he establishes. Howell is the Director of the John Henry Newman Institute of Catholic Thought and adjunct professor of religious studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In view of the fact that among many believers today the concept of "God's Two Books" is by no means acceptable, the early literature employing this interpretation of Psalm 19 and the varied reactions to it by prominent Christian thinkers and theologians makes Howell's book quite relevant to us today.