



## Victimized voices

### Blasphemy: Verbal Offenses Against the Sacred from Moses to Salman Rushdie.

By Leonard W. Levy. Knopf, 688  
pp., \$35.00.

**I**N MORE than a dozen books, this Pulitzer Prize-winning historian has brightly illuminated the genesis and exodus of our most cherished freedoms of religion, speech and press. This volume spotlights what Levy regards as a perennial enemy of all these freedoms—making a crime of blasphemy, the “speaking evil of sacred matters.” This is another vintage Levy production, well crafted, carefully documented and unabashedly liberal in perspective.

For more than three millennia, Levy argues, criminalizing blasphemy has served to protect the religious sensibilities of the community. The crime of blasphemy was repeatedly “transmuted” in the process and was often coupled or conflated with heresy, idolatry, treason, sedition and other moral crimes. Until the later 18th century, convicted blasphemers were punished by death, banishment or whipping. Since then, blasphemers have been more scorned than scourged, meeting with fines, injunctions or public reprimands. Though today blasphemy has become largely a dead letter in Western law, it is still punished in certain Muslim communities. Just ask Salman Rushdie.

Much of Levy’s book is an engrossing, encyclopedic account of the plight of “blasphemy victims.” Thousands have been charged with blasphemy over the centuries, including Socrates, Christ, Becket, Wycliffe, Servetus, Galileo, Bruno, Penn, Paine and Moxon. Levy provides largely conventional accounts of the

*Reviewed by John Witte Jr., director of the Law and Religion Program at Emory University in Atlanta.*

“famous martyrs.” He is much more interested in the fate of less-known “blasphemers”—Arminians, Quakers, Anabaptists, Ranters, Antinomians, Unitarians, atheists and iconoclasts. Two-thirds of his book dwells on the plight of these groups in England and America since the early 17th

century, and the voices that rose in their defense. Here specialists, even those who have read Levy’s earlier books on the subject, will find tantalizing new information.

Levy’s sympathies clearly lie with the “victims” of blasphemy prosecution. For him these persons were rarely “irreverent scoffers casting verbal opprobrium against God.” They were bold voices who chose to challenge the religious status quo, to experiment with novel ideas and institutions and to extend the pale of legitimate religious discourse and action.

## DISCIPLES and DEMOCRACY

Religious Conservatives and the  
Future of American Politics

Edited by **MICHAEL CROMARTIE**

Foreword by **IRVING KRISTOL**

Disciples

Democracy

“The rise of religious conservatives is the hottest topic in recent years, and this book is an indispensable guide, study, and critique. A lively, solid, and serious piece of work.”  
—**MICHAEL NOVAK** American Enterprise Institute

“A highly thought-provoking and well-balanced introduction to a subject not just difficult but combustible.”  
—**CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER**  
Syndicated columnist

“This profound book goes to the heart of questions faced daily in newsrooms, on school boards, in Congress, and at the dinner table. It is a serious and significant exploration of the intersection of rights, responsibility, community, and tolerance, conducted in a fashion that illuminates the discussion and enlightens the reader.”  
—**THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL**  
Political reporter, *Washington Post*

“An interesting and compelling analysis of a very significant political phenomenon.”  
—**TIMOTHY J. RUSSERT** Moderator, *Meet the Press*

“An important contribution to understanding an important topic. Very much worth reading.” —**WILLIAM KRISTOL** Chairman, Project for the Republican Future

**CONTRIBUTORS:** George Weigel • Ralph E. Reed, Jr. • E. J. Dionne, Jr. • Michael Horowitz • John C. Green • Michael Barone • Allen D. Hertzke • Richard Land • Michael Farris • Fred Barnes • James L. Guth • Lyman A. Kellstedt • Corwin E. Smidt

ISBN 0-8028-0847-6 • 148 pages • Paper • \$12.99



At your bookstore, or call 800-253-7521  
FAX 616-459-6540  
**470** **Wm. B. EERDMANS**  
**PUBLISHING Co.**  
255 JEFFERSON AVE. S.E. / GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503

**“Leaders with integrated authority are always shaping situations so that other people’s authority can blossom.”**

**-Cella Allison Hahn**

A church is a complex family of people from many backgrounds, ages and needs. How can a pastor lead them to shared ministry?

Subscribe to *The Christian Ministry* today, in order to receive the January-February issue on Church Administration.

- Yes, please send me a free copy of *The Christian Ministry* at no obligation.** If I decide to accept your invitation to subscribe, I will return the invoice along with \$14 for six issues (one year). If I am not interested, I will write “cancel” on the invoice and keep the complimentary copy.
- I prefer to pay now.** Enclosed is a check for \$14 (one year) or \$26 (two years).

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Church \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: The Christian Ministry  
 Subscription Services  
 407 S. Dearborn St.  
 Chicago, IL 60605-1150  
 (312) 427-2714



CCH94

Levy does not valorize these “victims” as he sometimes did in his earlier writings. He presents them warts and all, and shows how their plights were sometimes self-inflicted. He also makes clear that many contemporary “blasphemers” are inspired by “antireligious” rather than “new” religious sentiments. But Levy has little patience with the authorities who would punish blasphemy. He describes them repeatedly as “grim,”

“belligerent,” “caustic” and “manipulative,” driven largely by the desire to retain their power and position. He gives very little impression of the rich theological and jurisprudential apologies for considering blasphemy a crime that all three religions of the book have offered.

Though Levy loves liberty of speech, expression and religion, he is keenly aware of the social costs of removing traditional restraints.

## The Christian Century Lectures

in cooperation with

Asian Pacific Islanders/Morikawa Task Force

present

# The Wisdom of Mothers Knows No Bounds: Gospel and Culture in Asian Theology

Public Lecture by

**Dr. Chung Hyun-Kyung**

**8:00 p.m.**

**Feb. 2, 1995**

**Asian Resource Center**

**1025 King Street, Seattle, WA**

**Freewill offering**

Dr. Chung is Assistant Professor of Theology at Ewha Women’s University, Seoul, Republic of South Korea. She is a prolific writer on issues of gospel and culture. Her work gained increased recognition after a major address given at the World Council of Churches 1991 meeting in Canberra, Australia.

**Also: Breakfast with Dr. Chung**

**8:00–9:30 a.m.**

**Feb. 3, 1995**

**Asian Resource Center**

**1025 King Street, Seattle, WA**

**Reservations: Call Church Council of Greater Seattle,**

**(206) 525-1213**

*Dr. Chung’s appearance is supported by  
 The Coalition on Women and Religion.*

"We are not only a free society," he writes. "We are also a numb society. We are beyond outrage." I suspect God isn't.

### The Evolution Controversy in America.

By George E. Webb. University Press of Kentucky, 312 pp., \$34.95.

**A**S ITS TITLE suggests, this book is chiefly a historical survey of the American controversy over evolution, an idea that has polarized the people of this country. George E. Webb, professor of history at Tennessee Technological University, wrote the book in response to a creationist stu-

dent's reactions to a history-of-science lecture.

The book takes us through all the facets of the American response to evolution, from its earliest history through the antievolutionary preaching of Billy Sunday, the fundamentalist perspectives of William Jennings Bryan, and the less narrow approach of people like Billy Graham, to the numerous attempts in the South to pass laws prohibiting

the teaching of evolution or at least mandating that creationism as well as evolution be taught. The history of evolution as a scientific concept is stressed.

Webb concludes that "creation science" explanations are scientifically weak and represent a specific religious view; that a literal interpretation of Genesis is untenable; that decades of scientific research have confirmed and expanded Darwin's

#### TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE for Theological Studies Jerusalem

Offers SUMMER PROGRAM, June 20-July 19, for clergy, religion teachers, other church workers: biblical field trips, with five days in Galilee; cultural background to Gospels; Eastern churches; political/social/religious conditions in Israel/Palestine; Jewish and Islamic spiritualities. \$2,150 (room and full board at Tantur and Galilee; tuition; guided field trips). For details: Thomas Stransky CSP, Tantur, P.O. Box 19556, 91194 Jerusalem, Israel. FAX: 972-2-760-914.

#### INTERFAITH MINISTRIES: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITIES A National Consultation

You are invited to a powerful national consultation sponsored by the Interfaith Community Ministry Network to take place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on April 28-30, 1995. This consultation is organized by and offered to PRACTITIONERS of community ministry from across the country.

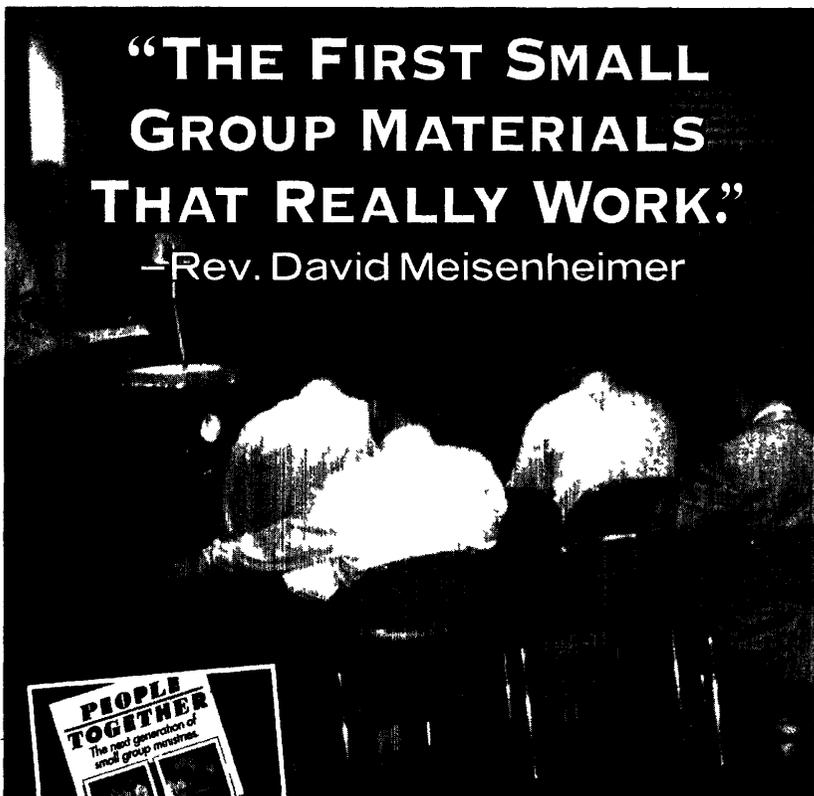
Consultation features Teacher/Student  
Dr. George W. Webber,  
New York Theological Seminary

For more information, contact:

Judy Johnson  
Northwest Interfaith Movement  
6757 Greene St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19119  
(215) 843-5600  
FAX (215) 843-2755

## "THE FIRST SMALL GROUP MATERIALS THAT REALLY WORK."

—Rev. David Meisenheimer

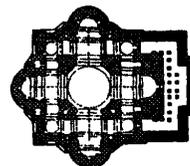


The People Together Series, by Rev. Dr. Pat Keifert and Rev. David Stark, has been tested and proven effective in mainline congregations throughout the United States for over 3 years. Use the manuals for design, training, start-up and evaluation of a new or existing small group ministry.

The People Together Series recognizes and encourages different group types to meet all of your congregation's needs. The manuals explain the principles and dynamics of small groups, rather than asserting the use of a single model for all applications. Specific manuals for each type of group assist group leaders prepare for the unique aspects they will encounter in their group.

Order a Complete Sample Pack for only \$99.87 plus shipping. You will receive one of each of the 7 manuals in the series along with complete descriptions and instructions. 100% Money Back Guarantee.

Order your People Together Sample Pack,  
Today! Call: **1-800-456-1293**



Church Innovations Publishing, Inc.  
5115 Excelsior Boulevard, PO Box 441  
St. Louis Park, Minnesota 55416