

be sure, not NBC—it captures the attention but does not hold the mind.

The clock ticking for America is the timer on a bomb: that's Twitchell's message, and he delivers it in a book that is chatty, entertaining, and too informal, finally, for its own good. To be right is commendable, but you win no disciples unless you are convincing too. A funeral notice should arrive on an engraved card, not a Post-it.

—James M. Morris

***THE PARADOX OF PLENTY:
Oil Booms and Petro-States.***

By Terry Lynn Karl. Univ. of California Press. 360 pp. \$55 (\$22, paper)

In Frank Herbert's science-fiction classic *Dune* (1965), whoever controls the spice—the desert planet's most valuable commodity—controls everything. Karl, a political scientist at Stanford University, would disagree. The message of her book is that he who controls the spice will live to regret it.

The author finds proof in the way the oil boom of the 1970s affected five previously poor nations: Venezuela, Iran, Nigeria, Algeria, and Indonesia. Each nation spawned ungainly centralized bureaucracies, all geared solely toward generating more oil profits. Entrenched interests, such as foreign

investors and state officials, acquired additional influence and fought to retain it, creating enormous barriers to change. Policymakers put aside any plans for nurturing long-term, sustainable growth. When the prosperity ended, the results were economic crisis and political decay. In this important addition to the literature on political economy, Karl explains why sudden riches pushed the policymakers of these strikingly different nations toward the same unwise choices.

A wealth of natural resources, the author suggests, can enfeeble a nation's institutions and ultimately bring about economic decline. Conversely, some of today's newly industrialized nations, especially those in Asia, may have had success in part *because* they lacked natural resources: "The need to overcome this poverty may have been one of the chief catalysts for building effective states." To Karl, this is "the paradox of plenty."

She is not the first to recognize the paradox. Juan Pablo Perez Alfonso, the founder of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, said at the peak of the oil boom: "Ten years from now, 20 years from now, you will see. Oil will bring us ruin." He was right, and this valuable book helps us see why.

—Elizabeth Qually

Religion and Philosophy

***STEALING JESUS:
How Fundamentalism
Betrays Christianity.***

By Bruce Bawer. Crown. 352 pp. \$26

When Harry Emerson Fosdick preached his famous 1922 sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" he answered with a rousing no. "They are not going to do it," he declared, "certainly not in this vicinity." Within a few years, it seemed that Fosdick was right. Following the humiliating Scopes "Monkey Trial" of 1925, fundamentalist Christianity was all but extinct in the vicinity of Fosdick's New York City pulpit and in other urban areas. For the next 50 years, the movement was largely confined to the back hills, storefronts, and radio waves of a white, anti-urban underclass. It was, from the perspective of the national culture, invisible.

Since fundamentalism returned to public view in the 1970s, the mainstream media

have scrutinized its clout, both cultural and political, and its demographics. But, by and large, the culture mavens have given a free ride to fundamentalist theology. Because there have been no modern-day Fosdicks subjecting these tenets to searching examination, many people have come to view fundamentalism and Christianity as essentially synonymous.

Bawer, however, contends that the teachings of fundamentalist Christianity are at odds with American history, principles of reason and fair play, and the Gospel itself. In fact, he argues that the fundamentalists are the heretics and apostates, twisting the text in pursuit of preordained conclusions. Fundamentalist Christianity "has stolen Jesus—yoked his name and his church to ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that would have appalled him."

The author proves surprisingly well suited