

BOOK REVIEW: THE GOSPEL WITNESS; p 15. JANUARY 2007

*Escape*

By James R. Hughes

Reviewed by Michael A.G. Haykin

Historical fiction is a tricky genre. The danger—one that faces all students of the past to some extent—is the import of present-day attitudes and ideas into the past and thus the production of a work rife with anachronism. This new work by James Hughes, an elder in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregation in Toronto, appears to avoid this problem and gives the reader a genuine feel for what it must have been like to have been a Protestant in Spain during the Reformation. Apart from the use of the word “wow!” on one occasion, nothing in the dialogue or descriptive content struck me as overtly anachronistic.

In some respects, *Escape* is a classic love story about the triumph of true love. In other respects, the story is a depiction of Biblical truth over the forces of repression and ignorant superstition. Set against the backdrop of the Reformation in Spain and France and the attempts of the Roman Church, especially in Spain via the Inquisition, to exercise damage control, *Escape* relates the way that a young Spanish believer, Bartolome Garcia, wins the love of his life, Catalina Mendoza, and at the same time—despite imprisonment and the martyrdom of his father, Juan Garcia (an actual historical figure who died for his faith in May 1559)—perseveres in his Christian faith.

For anglophone evangelicals familiar with the story of the Reformation in the British Isles, Hughes' book is a good reminder that Reformation truth had an impact on other parts of Europe, in this case, Spain and France. For a Calvinist like myself interested in the French Reformed cause, it was great to see depicted the way Calvinist doctrine and piety made great headway in France during this era.

I rarely read fiction these days, but this was a gripping read that I found hard to put down.

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