Clarion Review

Religion

How God Gets You Back
David F. Felsburg
Crossbooks Publishing
978-1-61507-597-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

A Sales Manual for Evangelists is what this book should be subtitled, and that is not meant to be demeaning or flippant. Dr. David F. Felsburg makes frequent and intentional use of sales jargon in this work, often comparing his fellow evangelists to vacuum cleaner salesmen and others whose job it is to close a deal.

"The world in which we live is full of sales people approaching us with unwelcomed information regarding products or services we neither want nor need," he reminds his hopeful missionaries. Americans, he observes "are accustomed to refusing a sales pitch even before the salesperson starts their pitch."

The key here, he instructs his reader, is to not be that kind of salesman, especially not when what you are selling is nothing less than redemption through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Raised Catholic, a product of an early parochial school education, an atheist from his teens through late twenties, then eventually a born-again evangelist and ordained Baptist pastor, Dr. Felsburg has seen the hard and soft sell of his movement. He chides those whose "pride" in "their own ability to convert a person is their downfall." The doctor urges those seeking to make converts to first "listen closely for indications that God is moving in their lives," rather than push and pull the unready toward God.

"There is no mechanism available for the believer to force the outcome of an encounter with an unbeliever," Dr. Felsburg wants his fellows in his faith to understand. "The job of evangelism is not one of seeing how aggressive he can be in sharing the Gospel of Christ to everyone he meets."

Intended as a follow-up to a previous book (*Talkin' about Christ—Over the Back Fence*), Dr. Felsburg sees this work as a way to help his fellow religionists prevent and deal with

rejection and frustration. Like the head of any good sales force, Dr. Felsburg seeks to help his salesmen to properly identify their market, find a way to meet their needs, and then not only close the deal but also make sure that the contract is serviced, and serviced for life.

There is an air of superiority in his writing that those who believe they have converted to the one-true-anything share, but to his credit it is not too thick. Dr. Felsburg, after all, is trying to teach his students to go for the soft sell. He wants them to understand that not everyone shares their "spiritually oriented mindset."

Dr. Felsburg reminds the born-again that they live in the real world, one where for most people "it is easier to celebrate the acquisition of a house, car, boat, business, or some other possession he can touch and feel, than to celebrate a God he cannot."

This book is not all pure sales manual. There are sections meant to reinforce the knowledge base of the sales force. These include explaining where, in his opinion, other Christian denominations and theorists from St. Augustine to Wycliffe may have got things a bit wrong, to a whole section on the history, meaning, desire for, and promise—and often failure—of the born-again baptism. While most of the book is about knowing how and when to make and close the deal, a good part of it is also about "keeping the new believer," as he puts it, and limiting that "attrition" which he says often leads even the most committed evangelists to question, doubt, and even stop being evangelists.

Mark G. McLaughlin