

This brief review can only scratch the surface of the many fascinating debates and events that Smith's book presents. For instance, I have not even mentioned the famous Cheshire Mammoth Cheese that Leland's townspeople made and which he delivered to Jefferson for his presidential inauguration, or of Leland's somewhat shifting antislavery views. Instead of relating all those stories here, I would recommend that readers pick up this book. Not only is the subject matter fascinating and the issues presented applicable today, but the book is also written in a highly readable style. The price of the book is unfortunate (and one can hope it will decrease over time) because this would be a helpful book not only to historians looking to read the first biography of Elder John Leland but also to interested pastors and laypeople who want to know more of their own American and Baptist history and the ideas that we have inherited and how these ideas shape life. My thanks to Eric Smith for this much needed resource.

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John R. Rice: The Last Revivalist of the 20th Century, by John R. Himes. Menomonee Falls, WI: Christ Walk Publications, 2021. vii + 319 pp. \$16.99.

Living in the shadow of a famous grandfather could be perceived as a blessing or a curse. In John Himes's case, he clearly believes being a grandson of John R. Rice to be a marvelous blessing indeed. And this perspective shines forth as Himes tells the story of his grandfather, John R. Rice.

John Himes is the fourth of twenty-eight Rice grandchildren, and he is the first among them to be a gospel preacher. He and his wife, Patty, served as missionaries in Japan for thirty-three years. Upon retirement from the mission field in 2014, he joined the faculty of Baptist College of Ministry in Menomonee Falls, WI, where he currently teaches Greek, church history, Bible, missions, and theology.

Although Himes does not state a formal overarching theme to Rice's life, it is clear from the subtitle of the book and the first and last chapters, entitled "The Making of a Revivalist" and "The John R. Rice Theology of Revival" respectively, that he aims to emphasize Rice's revivalist ministry, placing him in the line of revivalist preachers Charles Finney, D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, and Billy Sunday (3).

Rather than telling Rice's revivalist story in a chronological fashion, Himes chooses to follow a topical approach, and he does so in a very readable and engaging way. The book is readable and engaging because Himes relies on a multitude of sources to share an honest and accurate portrait of his grandfather. First, he consulted 77 of Rice's 205 books and pamphlets, quoting from most of them. Second, he shared the

memories and anecdotes of family members by reading personal journals and conducting interviews. Third, he included his own experiences interacting with Rice and his many acquaintances. Fourth, he studied a lot of fundamentalist and evangelical literature about John R. Rice, including scholarly dissertations, biographies of Rice and other twentieth century Christian leaders, historical works, and other Christian books, pamphlets, and newspapers (including *The Sword of the Lord*, of course). The well-organized bibliography (310–19) provides these resources, showing how diligently Himes did his homework for this project. Throughout the book I sensed Himes's great respect for Rice, but I did not detect a whiff of exaggeration or hagiography, which one might expect in such a work.

Himes tells Rice's story by tracing facets which I will classify under three broad areas: personal life, relationships, and ministry. First are several chapters about his *personal life* (a fourteen-page section of color pictures greatly enhances this material). These include the following: (1) "Living the Christian Life" (chap. 2) tells of his conversion and the main qualities of his spiritual life (e.g., love for the Word, prayer, humility, peace with God, giving, and soulwinning). (2) "John R. Rice the Man" (chap. 3) covers aspects of his personal life (e.g., love for speed, leisure activities, humor, and songwriting). (3) "The Patriarch of the Clan" (chap. 4) gives a short family history of Rice's parents and siblings, his children, and his grandchildren. (4) Himes includes an entire chapter ("The Wife He Loved"—chap. 5) on his grandmother, of whom he writes, "She may have been the greatest Christian I've ever known: Lloyds Rice, Mrs. John R. Rice, my grandmother" (99). (5) Chapter 11 ("The American Patriot") describes Rice's military career (he was drafted to fight in World War I but never made it to France due to infection from the mumps just as his division shipped off). The chapter also details his views on political issues such as communism, racism, modern Israel, and war in Vietnam. (6) Rice's last two years (1978–1980) are covered in "Going Home to Glory" (chap. 16).

Second, Himes devotes several chapters to Rice's *relationships*. (1) He was a "Friend to Many" (chap. 6) including P. B. Chenault, H. A. Ironside, Bob Jones, Sr., Lee Roberson, Monroe Parker, and Jim Lyons. (2) Chapter 7 ("Mentoring the Next Generation") delineates Rice's numerous connections with younger men who considered him a trusted mentor; these included W. A. Criswell, Tom Malone, Rick Flanders, Jerry Falwell, and Adrian Rogers. (3) Chapter 8 ("Two Families Serving Christ") adds two more names to Rice's group of mentees: Wayne Van Gelderen and John Himes (the author himself). (4) Himes does not shy away from Rice's relationships that ended unhappily, so he includes three separate chapters on his split from Billy Graham (chap. 13), his controversy with Bob Jones, Jr. (chap. 14), and his disappointment with the sensationalism of Jack Hyles (chap. 15).

A third group of chapters cover Rice's ministry endeavors. (1) "Reaching the World" (chap. 9) tells of Rice's outreach efforts in Japan, India, and South Korea as well as his generous personal support

of many missions and missionaries. (2) Chapter 10 (“Wielding a Mighty Pen”) explains what was likely the most influential aspect of Rice’s ministry. He wrote over 200 books and pamphlets, published the weekly newspaper, *The Sword of the Lord*, and for his last project, edited the *Rice Reference Bible* (now out of print). The *Sword* became the “most influential fundamentalist newspaper of the twentieth century, reaching a circulation of some 250,000 annual subscribers” (162). Rice published this newspaper from 1934 up until his death in 1980. It is still in print today. (3) “The Fundamentalist” (chap. 12) gives a glimpse into the origins of Rice’s fundamentalist beliefs which included: an effort to win souls, standing against theological liberalism, opposing error among evangelicals, and defending fundamentalists who were unjustly attacked (197). These beliefs were demonstrated in controversies with J. Frank Norris and Calvinists. Himes also includes explanations of Rice’s views on both personal and ecclesiastical separation with a particularly helpful summary of the latter (214).

I note only a few weaknesses. (1) An introduction that included a rationale for the theme of revivalism (assuming this is the main theme) would help the reader to have a lens through which Rice’s life could be better understood, but this was missing. (2) Going along with the first point, the chapters could have been better organized around major ideas rather than the seemingly haphazard arrangement that lacked any apparent cohesiveness. (3) At times I felt like I was reading John Himes’s autobiography rather than John R. Rice’s biography. While it is certainly justifiable to include personal reflections about one’s grandfather in a volume like this one, an explanation of the extended descriptions of Himes’s experiences would have been helpful at the beginning of the book. (4) A small quibble: Millard Erickson is *not* a “Southern Baptist theologian” (227); his roots are in the Baptist General Conference (now *Converge*).

Here are some noteworthy strengths. (1) This book was fun to read. Is this due to its well-written nature or the uniqueness of its main character? Probably both. (2) All the details one would hope to have in a biography are provided, and they are provided without being pedantic. (3) Himes provides helpful definitions of key terms (e.g., revivalist [28], patriot [179–80], ecclesiastical separation [214], new evangelicalism [227]). (4) The personal recollections added by Himes, especially in the chapters on Rice’s relationship with Bob Jones, Jr. and Jack Hyles, help the reader to see Rice’s life in color rather than black-and-white.

I recommend this book for anyone who enjoys reading about uniquely gifted preachers whose character superseded their abilities. John R. Rice was one of these men, and this biography tells his story well.

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