



BARCLAY PRESS

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Dear **,

Have you become so familiar with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that this call to radical living is now an easily ignored hum in your ears? If so, Karen L. Oberst's forthcoming book, *But I Tell You—Jesus Introduces a Better Way to Live*, can help you shift your perspective and rediscover the journey on the narrow path.

I hope you will consider featuring a review of *But I Tell You* or an interview with Oberst in **periodical**. Enclosed is a prepublication review copy of the book, which is scheduled for official release on July 22, 2007, by Barclay Press, a publishing company affiliated with the Friends (Quaker) denomination.

For your convenience I'm enclosing a review by L.L. Barkat, author of *Stone Crossings* (InterVarsity Press, spring 2008). You are welcome to reprint this review in **periodical**. A digital version is available upon request.

Please let me know if there is any further information I can provide to assist you in sharing this book with your readers.

Sierra S. Neiman
marketing/publicity

BUT I TELL YOU receives praise:

L.L. Barkat

*author of Stone Crossings: Finding Grace in Hard
and Hidden Places (InterVarsity Press, spring 2008)*

Reading *But I Tell You* is like sipping jasmine tea on a peaceful morning. It is quiet and approachable, sweetly preparing us to meet the day. But watch out: Oberst's book, like its subject the Sermon on the Mount, has a flavor of challenge we cannot easily put aside.

Tim Burdick

editor of simpleriver.org and student at George Fox Evangelical Seminary

The Sermon on the Mount has always been a difficult passage to realize today, and one that is often brushed over as a utopian dream. Oberst reaches back to the ancient texts, however, and brings out a core modern-day relevance that is both challenging and practical. *But I Tell You* is a great book for anyone who wants to spend a week or an entire year reading through the heart of what Jesus taught.

Robert A. Crandall

pastor and educator

But I Tell You is a fresh and refreshing look at the Sermon on the Mount in bite-sized chapters. It is not some self-improvement "fluff," but solid spiritual meat. The writing is clear, cogent, and compelling, making it easier to digest. But a warning: It is also convicting!

This attractive paperback is an excellent resource for personal study, reflection, and spiritual growth. Small groups would do well to use it for study and discussion. And teachers and leaders in the church will find excellent material for their ministries. The use and explanation of the Greek gives added support and authority.

My hope is that others are as challenged and encouraged by this book as I have been.

Faith Marsalli

pastor, Klamath Falls (Oregon) Friends Church

Karen's book offers its reader a challenging and practical view of the most radical sermon Jesus ever preached. This Greek scholar makes the original language accessible to us all. Her fresh perspective on the Sermon on the Mount inspires one to move from complacency to action.

David L. McKenna

educator, administrator, author

The Sermon on the Mount is like a diamond in the light. With each turn of the gem, a new facet of truth shines through. Karen L. Oberst gives us that kind of insight as she makes key words from the Greek text come alive with creative meaning and practical application. *But I Tell You* is a resource for daily reading, with a point to ponder as we go on our way.

Arthur O. Roberts

professor at large, George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon

Karen L. Oberst writes lucidly and with refreshing insights about a familiar portion of Jesus' teachings: the Sermon on the Mount. Her knowledge of original languages is matched by a good grasp of contemporary verbal culture. This enables her to convey in a conversational mode both the implications and the applications of these important New Testament teachings. The book thus offers thoughtful Christian readers a unique blend of authentic text and creative paraphrase.

Walter Wink

*author; professor emeritus of biblical interpretation,
Auburn Theological Seminary, New York*

The Sermon on the Mount is the most radical statement of Jesus' new reality, and *But I Tell You* is a good place to engage its challenge to a new life. This lively and readable book is made the more valuable thanks to the author's knowledge of Greek. Read, and enjoy.

NEWS RELEASE

Has the Sermon on the Mount become too Familiar?

“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs....” Many of us could fill in the blank in our sleep. Perhaps we grew up watching a cut-out Jesus speak to crowds from a flannelgraph board in a Sunday school classroom. Karen L. Oberst wrote *But I Tell You—Jesus Introduces a Better Way to Live* to surprise people like us.

“I remember my first pair of glasses,” Oberst says. “I was only nine years old, but I still recall the wonder of being able to make out every leaf on a tree. I was amazed at what a difference two small pieces of glass made in my perception of the world.” It’s that feeling of being surprised by what’s always been right in front of us that Oberst desires to share, and she pours this energy into helping readers rediscover Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. It’s a Scripture passage that is familiar (and perhaps boring) to many, but by nature it’s a startling collection of words; “You have heard that it was said... *but I tell you,*” Jesus says throughout the sermon. Karen gives this classic sermon a new, sharp focus with words and insights from the Bible’s original Greek language.

Oberst, a librarian and lover of languages, majored in Greek at Houghton College, Houghton, New York. She has also studied Latin, Hebrew, French, and German, with a smattering of Old English, Welsh, Russian, and Hindi. *But I Tell You* was born out of her extensive personal Bible study of the Sermon on the Mount.

Oberst takes readers through Matthew 5–7 a couple of verses at a time. She presents the verses in Greek and then offers a literal English translation. Following the translation Oberst shares keen insights into the passage. “By frequently presenting the original Greek, Oberst helped me imagine more deeply what the sermon meant to its first listeners and what it can mean to me today,” says reader and fellow author L.L. Barkat. Sections conclude with Oberst’s personal paraphrase of each passage.

Walter Wink, author and professor emeritus of biblical interpretation, Auburn Theological Seminary, New York, says, “The Sermon on the

Mount is the most radical statement of Jesus' new reality, and *But I Tell You* is a good place to engage its challenge to a new life." This is Oberst's goal—illuminating and restoring the depth of Jesus' radical call to counter-cultural living.

But I Tell You—Jesus Introduces a Better Way to Live will be released by Barclay Press on July 22, 2007. Barclay Press is located in Newberg, Oregon, and is affiliated with the Friends (Quaker) denomination.

For more information, to receive a digital file of this press release, or to arrange an interview with Karen L. Oberst, contact:

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REVIEW

Review by L.L. Barkat, author *Stone Crossings: Finding Grace in Hard and Hidden Places* (InterVarsity Press, Spring 2008).

Recently I've been having a conversation with an atheist. She is passionate, articulate, and moral. For some reason, upon reading *But I Tell You* I thought of my atheist friend. Maybe it's her emphasis on morals that created the connection.

In *But I Tell You* by Karen L. Oberst we find an explication of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. The sermon, of course, addresses the issue of morals. With colorful images, it lays out the morals God expects in his kingdom. And, as Oberst reminds us, it shows just how difficult it is for us to meet these morals, because they go beyond surface appearances, requiring, rather, "a change of heart" (p. 207).

Indeed, as I read through *But I Tell You*, I wondered how my atheist friend would respond to this aspect of the sermon. I found myself musing, "Does

she think it is okay to simply do the right thing? Or would she accept that morals must go deeper than outward actions, requiring a goodness of heart? And if she recognizes the importance of goodness of heart, how does she reconcile her secret, wayward thoughts?"

I haven't asked her these questions—yet. But I know that as I read Oberst's book, I was tempted to do so. Because in a steady and gracious way that's hard to wriggle past, *But I Tell You* calls us on the carpet. Again and again Oberst probes our supposed morality with concrete examples and questions of her own, like this one from the section "Love Your Enemies": "Do we consider the enemies of our nation to be the enemies of our church as well?"

Reflecting back, it's this aspect of Oberst's work that I most appreciated. She had a gentle way of getting around my defenses and catching me unawares. This talent fit well with the nature of the Sermon on the Mount itself, for it had a way of getting around people's defenses when Jesus first delivered it. In fact, Oberst observes, the Greek word that describes people's initial response to the sermon literally means "to strike out of one's senses" (p. 206). It's hard to have defenses when you're struck out of your senses.

Having heard the sermon countless times, it was unlikely that I'd be struck out of my senses by reading it in *But I Tell You*. Yet I still found sweet surprises. After all, I love language. I delight in words. And Oberst went back to the Greek quite often to unearth these surprises. Here's one example I won't soon forget: "The word translated 'blessed' is *makarios* in Greek. This is a poetic form of the word *makar*, which originally referred to the bliss of the gods, a euphoria that could not be known by mere mortals" (p. 4). Imagine, Jesus used this word when he said, "*Blessed* are the destitute in spirit."

By frequently presenting the original Greek, Oberst helped me imagine more deeply what the sermon meant to its first listeners and what it can mean to me today. Furthermore, by delving into cultural practice, as when she remarked that the "Gehenna of fire" referred not to "hell" but to a place where people burned garbage outside of Jerusalem (p. 63), I also

imagined that I might yet ask questions of my atheist friend; I simply don't want to picture her on the outskirts of the Holy City, burning.

Despite how it occasionally sent me into such strong imaginings, I felt that reading *But I Tell You* was like sipping jasmine tea on a peaceful morning. It was quiet and approachable, sweetly preparing me to meet the day. And like the Sermon on the Mount, it has a flavor of challenge I won't easily put aside.

New from Barclay Press

But I Tell You—Jesus Introduces a Better Way to Live

by Karen L. Oberst

July 22, 2007 release • 6" x 9" paperback • 230 pages

ISBN: 978-1-59498-010-7 • \$19.00

Think you know the Sermon on the Mount? *But I Tell You* will...

- cause you to think twice about Jesus' familiar words
- give you a deeper look into what Jesus meant, by offering insights from the original Greek
- help you shift your perspective and rediscover the journey on the narrow path to which Jesus calls you

Highlights:

- illuminating views into the culture of Jesus' day
- each verse of the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 5—7) in Greek
- literal English translations of the Greek
- author's paraphrase of each verse
- suggested reading list for further exploration