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Book Reviews

THE FIRST SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS (325-787): THEIR HISTORY AND THEOLOGY. By Leo Donald Davis, S.J. *Theology and Life Series 21.* Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987. 342 pages, \$17.95.

There may be no better way to introduce oneself to the primary doctrinal and ecclesiastical development of the early church than through a study of the history and theology of the seven councils discussed in this book. As Davis himself notes, these seven councils are also of supreme ecumenical importance, since the Orthodox churches of the East and the principal Protestant churches of the West recognize only these councils as having given truly ecumenical expression to the Christian faith. The ecumenical dimension of these first seven councils is clearly on Davis' mind. In a short epilogue (pp. 323-325) Davis notes that the Roman Catholics recognize twenty councils as ecumenical, and he gives a very brief but interesting sketch of that development which hangs so closely together with development of the papal doctrine. But Davis concludes with an ecumenical appeal to his fellow Roman Catholics: "Perhaps in the interests of better relations with the Orthodox and Protestants, the time has come to reconsider the whole question and accept with them only the first seven great councils as the truly ecumenical pillars of the faith" (p. 325).

But quite apart from its ecumenical thrust, this book is very simply a great historical summary of the first seven ecumenical councils. Questions concerning the gospel quickly focused on the central issue of the identity of Jesus Christ. Against Arius, the first and second councils (Nicaea, 325 A.D., and Constantinople I, 381 A.D.) asserted that Christ was the fully divine Son or Word of the Father and gave voice to that conviction in terms of a strictly trinitarian creed. The other five councils (Ephesus I, 431 A.D.; Chalcedon, 451 A.D.; Constantinople II, 553 A.D.; Constantinople III, 680 A.D.; Ephesus II, 787 A.D.) dealt more specifically with issues regarding the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ. In addition to doctrinal questions, the councils discussed issues of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and practice as well. Some of these questions are of abiding interest; some are not.

While the political, doctrinal, and practical aspects of these councils have elicited many specialized studies, this volume by Davis provides the immense service of giving an historical panorama of all seven councils. After an initial chapter on the Roman world, which was the broad context for the conciliar Church, Davis devotes one chapter to each of the seven councils. He introduces the chief figures, describes the theological issues, traces the interplay between church figures and imperial ones, discusses the conciliar decisions, and summarizes the 'aftermath' of each council which set the stage for further conflict and

sometimes enduring schism. In addition, at the end of each chapter Davis provides a short chronology of major events and a brief bibliography for further reading.

Davis succeeds in reducing the bewildering mass of historical and theological detail which surrounds these councils to a coherent and readable narrative. By and large Davis adopts consensus positions in his presentation and interpretation. In such an overview this policy is judicious and guarantees that the book will be a useful and faithful guide for a long time to come. Yet clearly Davis is not a slavish follower of previous work. He knows his material and consistently makes temperate and even-handed judgments. I should note especially his discussion of Cyril and Nestorius (and supporting cast). Also very good is his discussion of the difficult and generally unfamiliar terrain of post-Chalcedonian developments. The telling is enhanced by outstanding choices in the quoting of primary material.

I should not usually recommend a paperback book for the designated price. This one is an exception, however. Specialist or student, this book deserves to be on one's shelf.

William C. Weinrich

WISDOM AND HUMANNESS IN PSYCHOLOGY: PROSPECTS FOR A CHRISTIAN APPROACH. By C. Stephen Evans. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989.

Must "Christian Psychology" remain the "impossible dream"? Or can there develop a psychology that is "distinctively Christian, informed by basic Christian convictions"? In the face of much skepticism, the author of this text responds with a resounding yes. Evans' stated purpose is to show the possibility and the viability of a distinctively Christian psychology. He attempts to remove the chief barrier to such a resolution, namely, the empiricist picture of psychology as an objective, value-neutral affair modeled on the natural sciences. Psychology, he maintains, is nothing of the sort. It is not value-neutral. In that respect it is akin to Christian psychology. Once we realize that kinship we will discover the viability of Christian psychology, defined as "psychology which is done to further the kingdom of God, carried out by citizens of that kingdom whose character and convictions reflect their citizenship in that kingdom, and whose work as psychologists is informed and illuminated by Christian character, convictions and understanding" (p. 132).

Evans' critical evaluations of psychology and the principles of psychological research are thought-provoking. He exposes many of the false assumptions which have historically attempted to divorce facts from values. In so doing he hopes to pry open the door for "Christian psychology," whose wisdom is Christ, the wisdom of God incarnate. Christianity can help create wisdom. Christianity is grounded in revelation. Christianity has resources, including supernatural resources, for those who have ears to hear and a heart willing to obey.

Like other texts which have attempted to combine psychology and Christianity, this text too falls short of the mark. While Evans waxes eloquent about the "hermeneutics of psychology," one senses the author's failure to grasp the "hermeneutics of Scripture." While espousing the wisdom of God, does the author truly grasp the principles which underlie that wisdom? Does he recognize the significance of the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the like, or does he merely pay these things lip service? While he rejoices in ecumenism, has he perhaps forfeited his birthright for yet another bowl of theological mishmash in the process?

Wisdom and Humanness in Psychology is a provocative philosophical text. It is well-written. It is a succinct summary of the philosophy of psychology as it relates to the natural sciences. It presents several contributions of Christian learning. It even dabbles with the Word of God here and there. "Close, but no cigar" captures this reviewer's reaction.

Jan Case

THE PRAYER FOR ALL SEASONS: OUR LORD'S PRAYER. By Kenneth K. Miller. Kenneth K. Miller, 4014 Wenonah Lane, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46809. \$2.00

This volume is Pastor Kenneth Miller's second devotional booklet in as many years. The earlier work, *Bethlehem and Calvary*, is a translation of Luther's unpublished (in English) comments on Isaiah 9 and 53. This new devotional guide is Pastor Miller's own adaptation of the Lord's Prayer "amplified and applied for various sorts and conditions of men." Like the previous book, this one is another classic.

Thirty-six devotions proceed from praying the Lord's Prayer. The introduction, each petition, and the conclusion are expanded for either a particular season of the church year or for a particular occasion or circumstance. There is a devotion appropriate to old age, baptism, foundation of a church, sickness, approach of death, loss of a loved one,

evil times, scarcity of money, times of temptation, and many other occasions.

In this day when some want the Lord's Prayer to focus primarily upon the Holy Eucharist (following Augustine and other early church fathers), it is refreshing to see Pastor Miller expanding the application of the "Our Father" to many everyday situations. In teaching this prayer to the disciples Jesus must have intended a wide employment of the petitions. Kenneth Miller has recaptured its original intention.

This little devotional booklet promises to become a classic in Christian piety. I am preparing to give it to my family and best friends.

Waldemar Degner

JUDAISM: THE CLASSICAL STATEMENT. THE EVIDENCE OF BAVLI. By Jacob Neusner. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. 270 pages.

JUDAISM AND SCRIPTURE: THE EVIDENCE OF LEVITICUS RABBAH. By Jacob Neusner. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. 641 pages.

Jacob Neusner is University Professor and Ungerleider Distinguished Scholar of Judaic Studies at Brown University. Already some twenty years ago, he was framing fundamental questions concerning the traditional interpretation of the texts and figures of ancient Judaism. For example, his "In Quest of the Historical Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai" (*Harvard Theological Review*, 59 [1966], pp. 391-413) foreshadows the direction that his scholarly interests would take.

The intervening years have witnessed a prodigious production from his prolific pen. To understand his impact on the study of Judaism it is necessary to contrast the considerations and conclusions which he has advanced with those of the standard treatments prior to and contemporaneous with his own. The "classical" descriptions of Judaism, such as Max Kaddushin's *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York, 1952), G.F. Moore's *Judaism* (3 vols.; Cambridge, 1954), and more recently Ephraim Urbach's *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem, 1975), have all used what might be called a "systematic" approach for their descriptive task.

Neusner has probed these portraits with at least four pivotal methodological questions:

1. Why should a later synthesis (third century Mishnah and commentaries) be viewed as the predominant form of Judaism in first-century Palestine? Are not the "Judaisms" represented by Philo, by Josephus, by Qumran, by the various apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works equally worthy of consideration?
2. Why should the rabbinic strand of Judaism be conjugated by the categories of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophical and theological inquiry rather than the organizing topics of the Mishnah such as "seeds" or "women"?
3. Why should there be a non-critical acceptance of attestations?
4. Why should an unguided and undefined selectivity from the vast rabbinic corpus guide our study?

As these questions amply testify, it is simply wrong to dismiss Neusner as the "Bultmann of Judaica." He raises questions which are foundational and, furthermore, his fertile mind never shrinks from advancing new methodologies by which to address the questions which he has posed. As these two volumes attest, he then follows these methodologies and proposes fresh descriptions of the shape of Judaism in various epochs and locales.

As an entrance into the vast and suggestive Neusner corpus, this reviewer would suggest that the typical reader acquire *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Fortress, 1984). This slender volume not only provides a stimulating overview of the types of Judaism in first-century Palestine, it also illustrates the scholarly inquiry which Neusner so lucidly advances. The busy parish pastor, with even a modicum of interest in the Jewish context of Jesus' work, will find it hard to put this study down. If, as this reviewer hopes, the subject matter engages the reader with its countless implications for our understanding of antiquity, then the serious student of antiquity will want to think seriously about these two volumes.

Judaism and Scripture: The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah is a rich discussion of a major Jewish commentary on Leviticus which came to final editing around A.D. 400-425 in the land of Israel. The wealth of material which it provides on hermeneutical choices and the sorts of questions which the commentators ask of the text is immense. Perhaps Neusner own words are the best invitation to the student (p. xiv):

If we wish to know in detail how the framers of Judaism confronted the challenge of Scripture, we logically turn to the books they wrote in which they expressed their ideas by making use of verses of Scripture. As mentioned earlier, some of these are organized around the structure of the Mishnah, others around that

of Scripture. Clearly, the latter bring us closer to the answer, since in them the confrontation with Scripture proves immediate and ever present. The issue of the Tosefta and the Talmud is the Mishnah, however, to which Scripture forms a merely critical component, but it is not the definitive issue. The issue of Sifra, the two Sifres, Genesis Rabbah, and Leviticus Rabbah is Scripture, specifically, the rereading of Scripture in the light of the rabbis' established system. All of the texts at hand, both those formed around the Mishnah and those ordered in accord with the book of Scripture, find a place within, and point toward, a larger matrix of values and convictions, the rabbinic system as a whole.

It is this "matrix of values and convictions" which *Judaism: The Classical Statement* also describes. In this instance, *The Babylonian Talmud* or *Bavli* undergoes Neusner's analysis. Chapter after chapter (e.g., part two, "The Talmuds and the Canonical Truth of Judaism: Alike and not Alike") will beckon the reader into a world where new textual landscapes and suggestive vistas unfold.

There can be little question that the contours of that land have more in common with Christian antiquity than the sort of television-interpretation of texts that pop-evangelists promote. The profound respect and rich exposition which the rabbis display is a stark contrast with the shallow slapdash that rips text from context and supplants the quest for truth with mere technique.

Neusner has done a great service not only to Judaism, but also for those other "children of Abraham" who confess that the Christ was the Son of David and with Mary sing the Magnificat: "He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as He said to our fathers" (Luke 2:55).

Dean O. Wenthe

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. By Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. 880 pages. Hardcover, \$27.95.

This mammoth volume is the replacement for—not a revision of—the NICNT volume of 1953 on 1 Corinthians written by Dutch scholar F. W. Grosheide. In this replacement volume Gordon Fee, formerly of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and now at Regent College in Vancouver, dialogues with the vast amount of the scholarly scrutiny this letter has undergone in the past thirty-five years.

Fee's work is characterized by several helpful features. First, he has a refreshingly concise and insightful introduction (23 pages) in which he highlights relevant background on Corinth, the make-up of the Corinthian church, the unity of the letter, and the theological contributions it makes to the New Testament. Fee does not see division within the church as the basic problem that was calling Paul's authority into question and modifying the Gospel towards Hellenism. Rather, the problematic issue centered around what it means to be "spiritual": the Corinthian church was and Paul was not. A second feature of this volume is its exegetical thoroughness; the conciseness of the introduction gives way to 857 pages that demonstrate Fee's completeness. While his primary focus is the text, he exhibits an amazing command of extrabiblical and secondary literature. This latter feature can be a liability if one is seeking a commentary that is easy to digest. Thirdly, all the footnotes, which contain a majority of the detailed discussions of Greek grammar, manuscripts, and secondary literature are conveniently located on the bottom of each page. This allows the commentary to maintain both readability and depth. Lastly, Fee's high respect for the text as the Word of God is apparent throughout his analysis.

A few representative examples of Fee's treatment of the text give some sense of the tenor of this volume. In his discussion of "Women in Worship" (1 Cor. 11:2-16), Fee postulates that the problem with headcoverings was grounded in an "over-realized" or "spiritualized" eschatology; women were blurring the distinctions among sexes because they thought they had already "arrived" in the Spirit. It is also apparent that pagan cultic activities of the day sought to free individuals from the inhibitions of cultural customs (i.e., the way one wore her hair). Thus, Paul advocated the custom of a headcovering, says Fee, to encourage gender distinctions and also to discourage association with pagan cultic activities. In his analysis of the "Abuse of the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:17-34), the author notes that Paul's concern centers much more on individuals being excluded than on drunkenness at the table. While denominational bias does not characterize Fee's exegesis, his treatment of this pericope is sprinkled with the word "signifies" and is decidedly Reformed (that he writes out of a pentecostal-evangelical tradition is acknowledged in his preface, p. xi). In his examination of Paul's attention to spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14), Fee sees the apostle attempting to correct an abuse of the gift of tongues by putting this gift into the broader context of the diversity of gifts. Fee advocates that these chapters are not a diplomatic attempt by Paul to eliminate tongues, but show his desire to move tongues into the realm of private edification. Dr. Fee correctly elevates the importance of 12:1-3 (the Spirit's activity in the confession "Jesus is Lord") in Paul's understanding of spiritual gifts and writes (p. 582):

The presence of the Spirit in power and gifts makes it easy for God's people to think of the power and gifts as the real evidence of the Spirit's presence. Not so for Paul. The ultimate criterion of the Spirit's activity is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself.

This NICNT volume is sure to begin appearing on all bibliographies involving the study of 1 Corinthians. While it most certainly contains some problematic conclusions, it nonetheless merits the attention of scholars, students, and pastors.

Charles A. Gieschen
Traverse City, Michigan