

CONCORDIA
THEOLOGICAL
QUARTERLY

Volume 41 Number 2



APRIL 1977

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Book Reviews

I. Biblical Studies

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE BIBLE. GENESIS. Interpreted by B. Jacob. KTAV Publishing House, New York, 1974. 358 pages. Cloth. \$12.50.

Beno Jacob was considered by Jewish scholars to have been one of the foremost modern Jewish interpreters for the English-reading public. His great commentary on Genesis was published in 1934, but was destroyed by the Nazis before it could be accorded further attention. Dr. Ernst I. Jacob and Dr. Walter Jacob, respectively the son and grandson of the author, have reduced the original German commentary by the elimination of the technical philological material and the argumentation advanced against the Documentary Hypothesis and what used to be called "higher" textual criticism. The eliminated portions may be consulted in the German edition which was recently reprinted by KTAV. The publishers inform the reader that the core of the German commentary is to be found in lucid and clear English in this translated and adapted version.

Martin Buber, now deceased, spoke about this Jewish Genesis commentary as follows: "Beno Jacob's Commentary sets out on new paths. No other Commentary of our time is as thorough and so richly inspiring. It is an admirable work." Harry Orlinsky is high in his praise of Jacob's Commentary, when in the foreword he states: ". . . Jacob's commentary becomes indispensable for the fuller understanding of what the Bible has said and has continued to say from its inception to our own days. Such commentaries on Genesis as those of S. R. Driver (1904 often reprinted, and G. von Rad, 3rd edition, 1972) are of course of prime importance; but it is Jacob's commentary that gives their data and approach and the perspective that makes for a whole view" (p. VII).

While B. Jacob was opposed to the higher criticism of Genesis as found in the standard commentaries on Genesis, yet many of his interpretations are not much different. On many verses and chapters the views of Jacob are unique and novel, at least when compared with other Genesis commentaries. To understand this commentary it might be well to ponder the following statement of Orlinsky in the foreword:

Jacob could not accept the Documentary Theory as understood and applied by biblical scholarship in the first two-three decades of the twentieth century, i.e. in pre-archaeology days. To the vast majority of Christian scholars, the Hebrew Bible came to an end when the New Testament came into being, whereas to Jacob, as to any Jew who knew Jewish history, the Hebrew Bible did not come to an end; indeed, as a Jewish scholar looking back upon the panorama of biblical interpretation that covered nearly two thousand years of the Common Era, Jacob saw the Bible as a reality that had become increasingly vital and meaningful in the mishnaic and later rabbinic periods.

Both conservative and critical scholars will find views expressed in this commentary with which they would agree. Conservatives will appreciate the criticisms of the erroneous assumptions and conclusions of the proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis. Against evolution Jacob asserts (p. 1):

It is the first achievement of the Bible to present a divine creation from nothing in contrast to evolution or formation from a material already in existence. Israel's religious genius expresses this idea with monumental brevity.

Relative to the meaning of "day" in chapter 1, he writes (p. 4):

Indeed all efforts to understand these "days" as world periods of indefinite length are vain; this has been claimed in order to achieve conformity with the millions of years assumed by modern science for the origin of the universe. The Bible means by the word "day" only a day like ours. This is established for all six days as the seventh day as a day of rest naturally means a period of 24 hours.

Concerning the employment of "God" and "Lord" as a criterion for finding different divergent documents in Genesis, he states: "One and the same author may not only use both names, but even alternate them with intention and art; under certain circumstances they may be combined as I believe to have shown for many passages" (p. 14). Regarding a supposedly second story of creation in Genesis 2:4b-25, Jacob wrote: "It has been claimed that the following chapter contains a second story of creation. This is not conclusive as it would be a story of creation in which nothing is created—neither the heavens nor the earth, neither the sea nor the fish, nor as assumed birds, animals or man. They are "formed" and a garden is planted at a certain spot on the earth which therefore must already have existed" (p. 15).

The description of Eden, on the other hand, and the river which flowed from it into four other rivers is said to be "a product of fantasy and nothing else; else it is designed, not without irony, to disenchant us about the 'paradise.' It does not contain fairy tale treasures as in Ezek. 28, 13f." (p. 18). The Genesis Flood account is supposedly borrowed from the Babylonians "from whom Israel borrowed other things as well." The Bible took the raw materials and thoroughly transformed them through their own characteristic spirit. According to Jacob "the Bible clearly and decisively emphasizes religious ideas; it makes matter and form subservient to them. This proves the originality and energy of Israel's mind" (p. 60).

Jacob often points out the superiority of the Genesis materials when compared with Near Eastern mythological ideas, but Genesis 1-11 are not considered to relate true historical events. Those who hold to the factuality and historicity of the Genesis narratives will find that, even though Jacob differs with the Documentary Theory, he ultimately ends up with interpreting the Genesis materials allegorically and as purely didactic narratives which reveal how the ancient Hebrews thought about the great problems of life, such as God, man's relationship to nature, death, and immortality.

Genesis 12-50 are referred to as "tales." Jacob states that "some have doubted that the patriarchs were historical. It is not our task to examine this question." How can a commentator write an exposition and take a neutral stance on whether or not the Hebrew patriarchs were true historical characters?

An analysis of the isagogics and hermeneutics employed by Jacob would reveal that they cannot be harmonized with the type of hermeneutics that was used by Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, Arminianism, and Lutheranism before the invasion of the historical-critical approach in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Now and then this commentary will give an interesting insight but basically its interpretations disagree with such inspired Jewish writers as Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, and the author of the Letter to the Hebrews.

Raymond F. Surburg

II. Theological-Historical Studies

AGAINST THE WORLD FOR THE WORLD. Edited by Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus. Seabury Press, New York, 1976. 164 pages. Cloth. \$8.95.

In January 1975 an assortment of theologians convened in Hartford,

Connecticut, to issue "The Hartford Appeal for Theological Affirmation." It was widely recognized as a conservative turn in theology. At the time it appeared I had written what was intended as an editorial for THE SPRINGFIELDER to be entitled something like "Is Neuhaus Among the Prophets?" Whatever was written is lost beneath the debris of my desk. What was striking was that Pastor Neuhaus, a recognized "moderate" spokesman in the Missouri Synod, had organized a group of theologians to issue a conservative manifesto against liberal sins. Now the organizers of the 1975 Hartford meeting have rounded up some of its signers to appraise their own document. In addition to the editors, George A. Lindbeck, George Forell, Carl J. Peter, Richard Mouw, and Alexander Schemann have contributed essays. The general tone of most of the essays is virtually an apology for having given the appearance in the Hartford document of being conservative. Let this example from Lindbeck's essay prove the case: "There is, for instance, no particular Christology or doctrine of God in it [Hartford Appeal], although it implies that doctrines of God and of Christ are necessary. Similarly, it does not define what it means by resurrection or life in the world to come, but simply insists that their affirmation in some form or other is imperative" (p. 25). With such an understanding of the Hartford document, it is hard to see that there was any kind of retreat from liberalism into conservatism. Could we say that in January 1975 that some professional theologians got together to play theology for a week? Looking at the evidence a year later, it was a good thing that my original editorial of commendation got lost. Lindbeck also states that the Hartford Appeal could be signed by Thomists, Tillichians, Rahnerians, French theological structuralists, Lutherans, "and Barthians who oppose all these positions (not to mention Wittgensteinians, Whiteheadians, Pannenbergians, and Palamists) . . ." (p. 29).

The original motivation of the signers begins to emerge. It appears as if the signers thought that something had to be done to rescue the science or discipline of theology. If secularism was the answer, why have church, religion, or theologians? The Hartford Appeal was written to answer the call for rescue. The whole business is like a poker game where one player has won all the chips and gone home with the winnings. The Hartford signers are saying, "Let's keep playing, just for the sake of playing." If *Against the World For the World* was an attempt to revive the flash-in-the-pan enthusiasm of 1975, it failed. If we are to take the signers' word for it, it was just so many words.

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LUTHERAN CYCLOPEDIA. Erwin L. Lueker, editor. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1975. 845 pages. Cloth. \$24.95.

In 1927 Concordia Publishing House published the *Concordia Cyclopaedia: A Handbook of Religions Information, with Special Reference to the History, Doctrine, Work and Usages of the Lutheran Church*. It was Theodore Graebner who first suggested this reference work and he served on the editorial board until 1923, but in that year was replaced by Paul E. Kretzmann, with Ludwig Fuerbringer and Theodore Engelder serving as editors from the very start. They were assisted by a number of notable scholars in Synod. This volume reflected the conservative stance of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on all matters presented and discussed.

In 1954 its successor appeared utilizing materials that had appeared in its 1927 predecessor, but under the editorship of Dr. Erwin Lueker. Naturally this volume endeavored to present matters of Biblical interpretation, systematic theology, church history, life and worship in the church as they were understood and practiced in the two decades that had elapsed since 1927.

Renamed as *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, it was expanded to 1160 pages. William F. Arndt, Richard R. Caemmerer, Otto A. Dorn, and Frederick Mayer served as editorial advisers. A number of professors and scholarly pastors served as consultants.

In 1975 Concordia issued a Revised Edition of the 1954 *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, again with Dr. Erwin Lueker (now a Seminex professor) serving as editor. In the preface to the 1975 edition the reader is told that numerous corrections, suggestions and criticisms poured in as soon as the 1954 edition appeared and all these were entered into a master copy before the decision was made to issue a revised edition. The editor states:

The number of entries has been considerably increased, articles from the previous editions were carefully reworked, and the mechanics improved. Subjects on which information would be sought especially in a Lutheran cyclopedia are somewhat more complete than those on which information is available in many other reference works. Thus a length of an article is not necessarily a criterion of importance.

About 250 individuals, professors, district presidents, synodical executives, and others contributed to the revision. The views that now are dividing the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are partially reflected in certain articles written by those sympathetic to the so-called "moderate movement" in the LCMS.

In contrast to the three volume *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), this cyclopedia reflects an emphasis on matters related to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but it does contain a wealth of material useful to Lutherans of other synods. There is also information of a general nature about Christianity in all lands and at all times and places. Like its predecessors, the 1975 revision covers the major subjects in the areas of Biblical interpretation, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology, which includes religious education, preaching, counselling, evangelism, and worship. The revised *Lutheran Cyclopedia* contains information on church bodies and their official teachings, hundreds of historic persons, and the religious status of other countries. Lutherans in the United States and Canada will find numerous discussions of topics of interest to American and Canadian Lutheranism. Short bibliographies at the end of many articles will be helpful for research students or those wishing to pursue a subject in greater depth. Few outstanding personalities in the history of Christianity are forgotten. People associated with American and European Lutheranism are given space; there is even a list of all synodical and district presidents of the LCA, ALC and LCMS.

As one compares the *Concordia Cyclopedia*, *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, and the revised *Lutheran Cyclopedia* the observant reader will find theological shifts. For example, both the 1927 and 1954 cyclopedia identified "The Angel of the Lord" with the preincarnate Christ, while Wegner in his article lists this only as one option which he does not favor and omits the book which has an excellent chapter on this matter, namely, Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*. The article on archaeology assumes that the thirteenth century date of the Exodus is the correct one, which does not meet the requirements of the Biblical chronology and other data given in the Bible, as the fifteenth century date does. The article on the canon, originally written by William Arndt, is quite different in the revision. In it Fred Danker subscribes to the critical approach to the Bible and describes the Pentateuch as first completed around 400 B.C. (The Documentary Hypothesis underlies this view). He also speaks about two Old Testament canons, a limited Palestinian canon and a wider Alexandrian canon, and propounds the theory that it was the Synod of Jamnia which finally decided what books belonged in the Old Testament canon. This view is completely contrary to the facts, as well as opposed to the position of historic Protestantism and historic Lutheranism and represents a

radical change from its two predecessors. The article on "the covenant" fails even to hint at the fact that the most important element of the Abrahamic covenant was the promise that through one of Abraham's descendants, namely Christ (according to Paul in Gal. 3) all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The whole presentation is from the critical viewpoint. An excellent article written for the *Concordia Theological Monthly* by Dr. W. Roehrs is omitted from the bibliography, but it disagrees, of course, with the author's presentation.

A number of articles in the 1954 edition were shortened and condensed; sometimes articles were rewritten in the interest of an ecumenical approach. In the 1975 revision the term "Messiah" is defined as follows: "(Heb. *mashiach*, 'anointed.') Wood used in various forms in reference to anointing with holy oil (e.g. Ex. 2:41; I Sam. 9:16; I Kings 19:16). The New Testament word is Christ (Gk. *christos* e.g., Mt. 16:16; Jn. 1:41" (p. 531). In the 1954 edition Messiah is defined as follows: "One of the most significant names of the Savior on the basis of the prophetic sayings of the Old Testament, which pictured Him as the "Anointed of the Lord," one who should be endowed with the Holy Ghost without measure to be our Prophet, Priest, and King. The prototypes of the Messiah were the Old Testament patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings, some of whom were designed as anointed, others being inducted into their office by means of anointing. Jesus repeatedly stated that He was the Messiah as foretold by the Prophets of old. John 4:26; 10:24, 25; Matt. 26:64. The corresponding Greek name is Christ" (p. 671). The revision reflects the critical bias against Messianic prophecy so characteristic of current Old Testament criticism. However, other articles, like the one on "prophecy" (p. 640) and "Christ as Prophet" (p. 641), emphasize the Biblical and traditional position of predictive Messianic prophecy. The article on prophecy correctly emphasizes the truth, that a prophet is a forth-teller as well as a fore-teller.

While the revised *Lutheran Cyclopedia* has an article on "Pentecostalism" which describes what traditionally was the position of this movement and defined the churches espousing this erroneous kind of theology, there is no article on "Neo-Pentecostalism," which since 1961 has affected the main-line denominations of Christendom, including Roman Catholicism, Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, Lutheranism, and other Protestant denominations. Neo-Pentecostalism has divided and continues to divide churches and is one of many problems plaguing Protestant and Lutheran churches.

Since the historical-critical method is the big dividing issue today in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, it would have been extremely helpful to have had a discussion in this reference volume of the difference between the historical-grammatical method and the historico-critical, but the definitions given are exceedingly brief and do not inform the reader wherein the difference between the two methods consists. The article on "Commentaries, Biblical" (pp. 187-188) definitely favors the critical approach to Scripture. The writings of Hengstenberg, outstanding conservative Lutheran theologian of the nineteenth century, are belittled by citing F. W. Farrar's judgment, namely, the exegetical methodology of Hengstenberg "was retrogressive." The ICC Commentary which contains many extremely liberal volumes is cited "as authoritative, though some volumes have been superseded by fresh investigation." Conservative commentaries, those of Leupold and Laetsch, are not mentioned among commentaries not in sets.

With 250 individuals contributing, some of whom are now associated with Seminec and men sympathetic to the so-called moderate theology, it is not surprising that the 1975 revision does not portray the same consistency toward the Bible and its writings as was the case with its predecessors of 1927 and 1954. Hold on to your 1954 version and the 1927 version if you own them or can purchase them. Living theologians and church leaders are not mentioned; only those who are dead rated inclusion in this reference work. The many cross-references make this a very useful volume. Despite the foregoing

criticism and others that might be made, the revised *Lutheran Cyclopedia* contains much valuable information and is a volume every pastor will want to have in his library for handy access to data normally scattered through many books. Considering current book prices, the price asked for this volume is not too high.

Raymond F. Surburg

JESUS IS VICTOR: KARL BARTH'S DOCTRINE OF SALVATION. By Donald G. Bloesch. Abingdon, Nashville. 176 pages. Paper. \$5.95.

Among the conservative-evangelical American scholars, Donald G. Bloesch of Dubuque Theological Seminary is certainly one of the foremost interpreters of Karl Barth's theology. The present volume is an imbibible distillation of Bloesch's many years as a student of Barth's through his writings and one year as a participant in one of his seminars. Barth is no longer the rage at American seminaries now that he was in the late fifties, but Bloesch sees a possible revival. Since in my opinion, many of the current Missouri Synod problems can be traced back to undiluted injections of Barthianism into the theological bloodstream, the issue of Barthianism is not really dead in our circles. This does not mean that the students picked up Barth and read him, but rather it means that many professors became enamoured with the Swiss theological giant and a correlation between their views and his. *Jesus Is Victor* presents in a capsule form the quintessence of Barth's thought from a not altogether unsympathetic stance. Thus, for example, Bloesch seems to assert that Karl Barth does not deny the resurrection as an event in time, but that his stress is that only faith can understand its meaning (p.53f). The author's treatment of this often debated point in Barth's position simply does not receive adequate discussion. Perhaps the matter should have been approached this way: Is it possible for Barth to discuss the resurrection apart from faith? Here an answer would have been more revealing.

Bloesch places himself with the Reformed, and thus his mindset is more geared for understanding Barth, who is a Calvinist by tradition and commitment. The real key to Barth's theology might very well be the dominance of grace as a supreme attribute in God. This is different from Lutheran theology, where grace is a result of Christ's crucifixion. Attached to Barth's view of grace is God's sovereignty, the Calvinistic heritage. Sovereign grace overcomes nothingness and brings creation into existence and it also effects the redemption. In spite of some equivocation on Bloesch's part, he seems to say that for Barth grace does overcome all unbelief. If grace is to be totally sovereign, universalism, the doctrine that all men will be saved, is the only natural conclusion. The Barthian ambiguity results from a hesitancy to confine the sovereign grace by defining it. Placing all of God's activities under grace as does Barth is as objectionable as when it was done by the older Reformed theologians, who spoke about creative grace.

Barth's theology is attractive even to many conservatives because of its near-total reliance on Biblical terminology. But beneath the Biblical mask lies a philosophy that is not Biblical. For Barth there is no personal Satan. The evil God overcomes is nothingness and it is this battle which is described in the Bible. But God's creative act was not a battle against nothingness and His redemptive act through the cross is not cut from the same cloth. Bloesch's title for Barth's salvation doctrine, *Jesus Is Victor*, is appropriate because in Him the cosmic battle, as viewed by Barth, is finally won.

The present volume fails to list the many other readable theological books written by Bloesch. We can only assume that the publisher does not want to sell the books of his competitors. Bloesch's dialog with Barth is respectful even where he takes issue with his teacher. The result of this type of approach

is a Barth which is supposed to be more acceptable to the conservative mind. But there is no need to make an already deceptively alluring Barth even more attractive.

In theology there is always the debate over whether to begin with a system of theology or with the Bible. Barth presents a system of theology and presents all kinds of statements which exist independent of Biblical exegesis. After a bout with Barth, a saner approach suggests that a piece by piece approach to the Bible will at least not be deceptive.

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