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Book Reviews

EASTER GOSPELS: The Resurrection of Jesus according to the Four Evangelists.

Robert H. Smith. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983. 245 pages.

While the author takes a verse by verse approach, the entire enterprise is rendered invalid by certain *a priori* assumptions accepted without testing. For example, Matthew and Luke wrote with Mark in front of them; Matthew was a Gentile and not a Jewish Christian; and John wrote independently of the synoptic tradition. Not only do the earliest church fathers contradict these views, but unless we expect the Fourth Evangelist to copy from the others word for word (what use would that be?), the internal evidence from the Gospels themselves contradict this. John shows a definite awareness of the Synoptic Gospels.

Some separate sections are in themselves disappointing. For example, totally missed is the apologetic significance of the Jewish story, recorded in Matthew, that the body of Jesus had been stolen. What is to be believed about the corporeal resurrection in Luke is less than fully clear. On one hand, Luke is seen to stress the physical reality of the resurrection (p. 123) and then the next page says that the Evangelist was not commenting "on the nature of Jesus' resurrection body," but affirming "that death could not hold the crucified Jesus." In the introduction the Evangelists are said not to have the modern thrust that the resurrection of Jesus is foundational for a general resurrection. Such an opinion fails to take into consideration that John's account must be understood within the context of his entire Gospel, where the connection is made (11:25). Even the suffering with Christ theme of Matthew and Mark is necessarily complemented by a glorification with him. Such glorification means resurrection. Isolating the Easter Gospels in this way lays open the fundamental weakness of this approach. Each evangelist intended that his account of the resurrection was to be understood in the light of his *own* Gospel and against the background of what was written and known. A side by side, verse by verse approach is almost a throwback to the proof text method and does not even begin to plummet what each evangelist was doing. Some time ago Jack Kingsbury in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* integrated, in my opinion quite successfully, Matthew's resurrection within the totality of the entire Gospel. This approach is preferable in determining the original meaning of the evangelists and in offering something a bit more useful for the church.

David P. Scaer

ON BEING REFORMED: Distinctive Characteristics and Common Misunderstandings. I. John Hesselink. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1983. 159 pages. Paper.

Any doubts that the Lutheran fathers may have dealt overly harshly with the Reformed are removed by Hesselink, a dyed-in-the-wool conservative Calvinist. The seminary professor directs the first twelve chapters against misconceptions and the final one points out distinctive characteristics of this faith. Chapters proving that

not all Reformed are of Dutch background and are not committed to a particular polity are so harmless that they could have been excluded without a great loss. Hesselink bends over backwards to diminish the importance of creeds in his tradition and mentions that all Lutherans, except for the Missouri Synod, have taken the same route. (At the turn of the century Pieper said just about the same thing about the Reformed.)

The chapter on the liturgical character of the Reformed self-destructs when it is mentioned that the Lord's Supper is celebrated four times a year. While Lutheranism is Christocentric, Calvinism's stress is on the sovereignty of God. We are warned by the author of "an unbiblical Christocentrism." The Reformed faith is still the religion of the Holy Spirit who works in a parallel action alongside of the Word. For Lutherans the Holy Spirit works only in the Gospel, i.e., the message about Christ. Hesselink is honest and to the point. He has performed a great service. No other conclusion is possible than that Lutheranism and the Reformed faith are two different religions, beginning with their differing concepts of God, Christ, and revelation. That is only the start. The problem on the Lord's Supper is only a symptomatic blemish of the real fundamental problems. A book like this is always of great value as it shows where some characteristically Reformed thoughts have been panned off as Lutheran.

David P. Scaer

THE POWER OF THE POWERLESS: The Word of Liberation for Today.

By Juergen Moltmann. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1983. 166 pages. Cloth, n.p.

About twenty years ago Moltmann's *theology of hope* placed him in a position of prominence in the theological world from which he has not fallen. His other books, never matching the first in depth and scholarship, are variations on the theme adopted from the philosopher Ernst Bloch that disappointment provides the future with the foundation of hope. In *Power of the Powerless* the eighteen chapters are sermons centering on this theme with special attention to man's participation in the social order to bring about a better world existence.

With the American background of the Social Gospel, Moltmann's message has found even a more fertile soil on this side of the Atlantic than in its German homeland. Each chapter is supplied with a Biblical text and many provide a concluding prayer. This is usable material. Attractive in Moltmann's approach is a deliberate attempt to be Biblical both in themes and language, very much like Karl Barth. Of course, this can be its greatest danger. A sermon on Noah becomes a plea for conserving natural resources. One on the peacemakers pushes pacificism. A final sermon urges Christian responsibility for Third World countries. Moltmann is Reformed, but with his concept of God's involvement in the suffering world he is more like Luther in content and language than Calvin with his idea of God's transcendence. Thus the sermon

for Good Friday bristles with phrases (of course, abstracted from the totality of Moltmann's theology) that emphasize a suffering Christ, too often forgotten. If the suffering theme of Moltmann is a corrective for a Christology which sees humiliation as an embarrassing interlude in the divine plan, it would have no meaning without the "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven." Since this is missing, Moltmann's Christ is hardly more than the man who in disappointment continues to hope.

David P. Scaer

MELANCHTHON'S BRIEFWECHSEL. Band 4. Regesten 3421-4528 (1544-1546).

Bearbeitet von Heinz Scheible unter Mitwirkung von Walther Thuringer. Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1983. Cloth. 477 pages.

Collected here are one thousand one hundred and seven letters from the year 1544 to 1546 of the German reformer, Phillip Melanchthon. The letters are not transcribed word for word, but the editors have organized the original material into straightforward sentences. In the more extensive letters, the sentences are numbered for more efficient reference. Some of the letters are authored by Melanchthon along with Luther and Bugenhagen and others are those received by him.

As these letters come from the period just around Luther's death, some of them can be mentioned briefly. On February 17, 1546, Brenz wrote to Melanchthon complaining about participating in the Regensburg colloquy with the Catholics as they had not changed their position on justification. On the next day, Melanchthon wrote Luther wishing him a safe journey home, thanking him for informing him about the death of Pope Paul III, and saying that his wife had sent him the requested medicine. On February 21, the elector sent Melanchthon a letter telling him to make funeral preparations for Luther. Other letters speak about the emperor's mobilizing of the troops to move against the Lutherans. Reformation research will benefit greatly from the publishing of these edited letters.

David P. Scaer

WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY. Volume 19. By Peter C. Craigie. Word Book Publishers, Waco, Texas, 1983. Hardbound, 378 pages.

Word Biblical Commentary has been hailed as a new repository of Biblical learning. Word Book Publishers claim to have engaged a team of international scholars to provide a showcase of the best in evangelical critical scholarship for a new generation. The completed commentary will comprise 52 volumes, of which 32 will deal with the Old Testament. The general Editors are David A. Hubbard and Glenn Barker, with John D. Watts as the Old Testament editor.

Volume 19 treats Psalms 1-50, following the division adopted by the Anchor Bible. The author of this volume is Peter Craigie, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities in the University of Calgary. In his commentary Craigie gives a careful analysis of the language and form. He was concerned to communicate both the emotional and theological impact of the Psalms as he believes these poems were originally experienced by the Israelites in their worship services and also in their private devotions. Each of the Psalms receives a new translation which is based on the latest textual and linguistic research. Craigie has specialized in Ugaritic and, like Dahood, uses Ugaritic to explain and correct the Biblical Massoretic text. Page 276 lists all the Ugaritic passages and words used and consulted in dealing with the form, structure, and contents of the Psalms discussed in volume 19. In addition to notes on each psalm there are a number of introductory essays that include "The Origin of Psalmody in Israel," "The Compilation of the Psalter," "The Psalms and the Problem of Authorship," "The Theological Perspective in the Book of Psalms," and "The Psalms and Recent Research," covering pages 25-26.

The historical-critical method is the controlling hermeneutic of Craigie's in his interpretation of Psalms 1-50. Craigie claims that the poems in the Psalter are man's response to Israel's experience with God. Thus the Old Testament contains some books that are a revelation from God to man, and other books contain man's response to his religious experience. This means that only certain books are actually the Word of God. That surely is not the stance of the New Testament. In numerous passages New Testament authors quote passages from the Psalms as the authoritative Word of God and do not consider the Psalms merely man's thoughts and words. Christ is not found at all in the Old Testament by Craigie. Psalms like 2, 8, 16, 45, 69, 89, 110, cited in the New Testament as predicting events about Christ, are interpreted in a completely different manner. In fact, Craigie claims that the Psalms have different levels of meaning. Psalm 2 is a coronation poem, which had a different meaning originally then when it was later written down; then it was again reinterpreted. One may ask: What is the difference between this theory that a text has different theological levels depending on the century of man's existence in which it is employed, and the three different senses Origen attributed to a text or the fourfold sense so popular throughout the Middle Ages till the time of the Reformation?

Word Publishers claim that their new commentaries "offer a thorough scrutiny of the evidence produced during the current generation" of major discoveries found in the historical, textual, and archaeological fields, presented with a firm commitment to the authority of Scripture as divine revelation. But the historical-critical method undermines the authority of Scripture; the Psalms are said to contain objectionable sayings (the so-called maledictory Psalms) and erroneous views but does not do justice to the Psalms because of its rejection of the basic hermeneutical principle that a text has only one intended sense and not multiple meanings. Serious,

of course, is its failure to find Christ's life and saving work foretold and taught in a number of Psalms. This commentary is a good example of the manner in which neo-evangelicalism has been influenced by the historical-critical approach to the Bible, which undermines the reliability and veracity of God's Word and departs completely from the hermeneutical principles given by God Himself in His Word.

Raymond F. Surburg

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMITIC LANGUAGES. By Gotthelf Bergsträsser
Translated by Peter T. Daniels. Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1983. Paper,
276 pages. \$20.00

This is a translation of Bergsträsser's *Einführung in die semitischen Sprachen*, originally published in 1928 (third edition issued by Max Huebner Verlag, Ismaning, Muenchen, 1977). This German scholarly work was translated by Peter T. Daniels, who has also provided notes, a bibliography, and an appendix on the Semitic Scripts. Bergsträsser's *Introduction to the Semitic Languages* has chapters on the following languages: (1.) Proto-Semitic, a purely reconstructed language; (2.) Akkadian; (3.) Hebrew; (4.) Aramaic, both Old Aramaic and Modern Aramaic; (5.) South Arabic and Ethiopic; and (6.) North Arabic. The book concludes with three appendices: common Semitic words, paradigms, and Semitic scripts. The new American translation gives a listing of periodicals and collections, an extensive bibliography, and an index of authors mentioned throughout the book, all new features.

Although the book appeared fifty years ago, it is still not outdated. Daniels asserts about the work he translated: "Gotthelf Bergsträsser (1886-1933) was one of the great Semitic linguists and philologists. This small volume encapsulates his learning, and every page yields concise statements of remarkable insight. He intended the book for elementary classes in Semitic linguistics, but only one familiar can begin to appreciate the achievements in these brief chapters" (p. xv). Since the appearance of Bergsträsser's *Introduction*, Ugaritic and Eblaite (or Eblite) have been discovered, but they are not included in this edition by Daniels. Here is the reason given for not incorporating information on these languages: "It was happily decided in advance, since the vowels are only partially transmitted and Bergsträsser treats only fully vocalized dialects. Ugaritic, as well as other unvocalized dialects (Phoenecian, Epigraphic South Arabic) and the problematic Amorite and Eblite, however, are included in the notes in the bibliography" (p. xvi).

In the notes and comments Daniel had the assistance of a number of his teachers, outstanding scholars of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Scattered throughout this comparative grammar are twelve very useful tables. Students interested in the relationship of Hebrew and Aramaic to other Semitic languages will be grateful that Eisenbrauns undertook the publication of this well-printed book.

Raymond F. Surburg

MARTIN LUTHER'S DEUTSCHE BIBEL. By Hans Volz. Herausgegeben von Henning Wendland. Friedrich Wittig Verlag, Hamberg, Germany, 1977. 253 pages. 98 marks.

Although this excellent work was published in 1977, it might be looked upon as preparation for the 450th anniversary (1984) of the translation and publication of Luther's Old and New Testaments as the German Bible in 1534. The publication of Luther's German Bible has been labelled as the greatest book event of the sixteenth century. Dr. Hans Volz (1904-1978), an authority on the Luther Bible and also a contributor on Luther's German Bible to the Weimar edition of Luther's works, intended this volume as a publication on the origin and publication of the German Bible, especially for the general public. Unfortunately, he was not able to see the project through, a task carried out by Henning Wendland.

The volume has ten chapters, plus a time table, a bibliography and a listing of all persons and events referred to in the book. The introductory chapter was written by Wilhelm Kantzenbach and treats Luther's language in the German Bible. The next chapter presents an account of the German pre-Lutheran Bibles, published in the late Middle Ages. The third chapter gives a history of the stages that preceded Luther's translation activities. The fourth chapter discusses the lives of the men who helped Luther with his translation and revisional activity, such as Philip Melancthon, Johannes Bugenhagen, Caspar Cruciger, Justas Jonas, Georg Spalatin, Matthaeus Aurogallus, and Georg Roerer. The fifth chapter, in 17 pages, lists and discusses the publishers and printers involved in the publication of Luther's New Testament and later of the complete Bible. In the next chapter Volz lists the German Bible in single editions, followed by a chapter giving the history of the complete editions of the Bible. In the next chapter Volz reports on the spread and effect which Luther's German Bible had on Germany and other European lands. Wittenberg had a number of printers and binderies busy publishing Luther's Bible and other writings. However, as Volz shows, in chapter nine, the Bible of Luther was also published in Basel, Zuerich, Augsburg, Nuernberg, Mainz, Worms and Strassburg. By means of his Bible translation Luther had created the new High German language for Germans, but Low German also was spoken in various parts of what later was to be called Germany and Volz in still another chapter shows how translations were made in Low German. In his last chapter the influence of Luther's translation was seen in the fact that King Christian II, who had to flee his land because of his attempt to introduce the Reformation, lived in Wittenberg in the house of Lucas Cranach, where he witnessed the publication of Luther's September and December New Testaments in 1522. The king determined to make the Bible available to the Danes; and in 1524 appeared a translation of the New Testament in Danish, published in Leipzig, but actually done in Wittenberg by Christian Vinter, Hans Nikelsen, and Henrik Smith (p. 124).

An outstanding feature of this book is the many reproductions of pages from various books connected with the history of Luther's complete German Bible. The volume contains a gold mine of information about Luther, his co-workers, and artists and printers of the German Bible.