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Table of Contents

G. Waldemar Degner (1925-1998)	3
Letter to a Preacher	
Donald L. Deffner	5
A Case of Identity: Reflections on the Church's Preaching in The Modern World	
Charles Hughes	19
The Problem and Power of Preaching: Romans 1:16	
Loren Kramer	29
Learning from Pieper: On Being Lutheran in This Time and Place	
Gilbert Milaender	37
Theological Observer	50
Germany and Australia: Ordination of Women?	
Why We Need a Critical Edition of Walther	

Book Reviews 57

Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers. By Christopher A. Hall William C. Weinrich

Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission. By Abraham Friesen J. Preston Byrd Jr.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: The Roots of 250 Years of Organized Lutheranism in North America. Edited by John W. Kleiner Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus. By Mary Ann Donovan William C. Weinrich

Union and Confession. By Herman Sasse Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Martin Luther: Learning for Life. By Marilyn J. Harran Douglas Punke

Church History an Essential Guide. By Justo L. Gonzalez Grant Knepper

The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation. By James C. Russell. Karl Fabrizio

Where Earth Meets Heaven: a Commentary on Revelation. By John G. Strelan Charles A. Gieschen

Testing the Boundaries: Windows to Lutheran Identity. By Charles P. Arand. Martin Noland

Books Received 78

Book Reviews

READING SCRIPTURE WITH THE CHURCH FATHERS. By Christopher A. Hall. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998. 223 Pages. Paper.

Interest in the early Church Fathers and their interpretation of the Scriptures, if not in full-bloom revival, is nonetheless vibrant. At least two reasons assist in explaining this phenomenon. One is the on-going search for Christian unity among the churches. Despite the importance of agreement in doctrinal understanding, sacramental practice, and polity, clearly all Christian communions claim the Scriptures to be, at least, the most important source of faith and life. Since the splits and schisms that have marked the church's history were accompanied by rival claims of Scriptural authority and imprimatur, the move to study the interpretive history of the so-called "unified church" is understandable. Secondly, the method and the claims of historical criticism have simply collapsed, along with most intellectual structures which have their foundations in Enlightenment rationalism. I remember a well-known patristic scholar telling me some ten years ago that he was spending all of his time in the history of exegesis. Why? Because the analytic impulses of higher criticism fractured the Scriptural narrative into smaller and smaller units of material that finally had no organic relation to each other, either historically or thematically. Of course, the final redactor was the "real" evangelist, but by the time one got to him, the disjunction of faith and history was so great that the message of the Scriptures was utterly compromised. "Historical criticism makes the Scriptures incapable of being preached." So said my patristic scholar friend.

But if one admits that the Scriptures are to be preached, then one has already largely answered the question posed in the first chapter of this book: "Why Read the Fathers?" The claim that the Scriptures are not merely source materials for historical reconstruction of the early "Jesus Movement," but are, in their own intentionality, to be addressed to faith and life, locates the Scriptures within the church where that faith is confessed and that life is lived. Not surprisingly, as long as Enlightenment assumptions were regnant, no one thought it necessary, or even interesting, to read the Fathers. They certainly were not guided by the light of pure reason, shining forth from the autonomous mind. They were shackled by tradition and dogma, the imposition by external authority upon the thinking capacities of human beings. That, of course, did happen. But there is today a healthier appreciation of the reasonableness of tradition and dogma.

The real "truth" of the purely autonomous individual is a self-serving nihilism. That is the new doctrine of post-modernism. And it is more correct than many wish to admit. Why is it that at a time when the sale of Bibles is at an all-time high, and there is more insistence and encouragement for individual Bible study than ever before, that Bible literacy is virtually non-existent and the use of the Bible seems congruent with just any agenda and viewpoint (listen to the assinities on much evangelical television!). Answer: because Bible literacy implies a communal understanding of the text; something that can be and must be taught and learned and not simply absorbed by privatized reading. It is the burden of this book to elucidate these points more expansively.

Like earlier studies of early Christian exegesis (for example, Kugel and Greer's *Early Biblical Interpretation* [1986] and Simonetti's *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* [1994]), Hall intends to describe the attitudes, the intellectual commitments, and the hermeneutical methods of the Fathers. Within the scope of his book, he does a fine job. However, unlike earlier studies, this book openly, although not obtrusively, has an intentioned agenda. It is a flower of a very particular tree. This book is really the introductory guide to the large project guided by Thomas Oden, the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (ACCS). This project is properly being called a "Christian Targum," for it intends to provide select, but significant patristic quotation on the biblical text. Hall answers the question, "Why Read the Fathers?" by a quick narrative of the intellectual conversion of Thomas Oden from the aridity of collapsing modernity to an appreciation of the wisdom of the past. That gives the personal testimony entrée to the community endeavor of patristic reading. Significant human experience leads one to a common humanity and its concerns (Paul, Luther, Augustine). A chapter on the "The Modern Mind and Biblical Interpretation" places the publication of the ACCS in the contemporary intellectual and culture context.

After a chapter on "Who Are the Fathers?" (antiquity, holiness of life, orthodox doctrine, ecclesiastical approval), Hall chooses "The Four Doctors of the East" (Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom) and "The Four Doctors of the West" (Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great) as his exemplars in describing patristic interpretation. Each section provides a brief introduction to the life and career of each father and then gives a "hermeneutical sampler" in which the biblical interpretation of each

is examined on the basis of particular discussion. Given the introductory intent of this volume, one cannot fault the choice of these particular fathers. Nonetheless, all of these "doctors" are fourth and fifth century writers who, despite their differences, are governed by much the same issues and concerns. The biblical hermeneutics of a Tertullian, an Irenaeus, or a Cyprian would have been proper here. Nonetheless, the discussion of Hall is fair and gives the reader a good beginning in following the biblical thinking of these important figures.

Two further chapters intend to provide broader background for patristic exegesis, namely, the well-trod differences between the "Alexandrian" and "Antiochene" exegetical approaches. Here Hall remains well within the boundaries of common discussion. The "Alexandrian" exegesis is characterized by allegory in which the persons and events of the text suggest "spiritual" realities and virtues. Hall mentions the importance of Philo and, of course, Origen. However, when he claims that Justin Martyr and Irenaeus are "predecessors to Origen," I must wonder whether he has been reading the same Irenaeus I have. Despite the difficulty of precise, inclusive definitions of "allegory" and "typology," one cannot simply proceed as though the difference is so slight that Irenaeus and Origen become the two representative figures of "Alexandrian" exegesis. Whatever Irenaeus is, it is not "Alexandrian." The "Antiochene" exegesis is characterized by interest in grammatical, historical, and rhetorical details. Here Hall discusses Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Here he also discusses the Antiochenes' important notion of "theoria."

In a final chapter "Making Sense of Patristic Exegesis," Hall discusses a number of important issues implicitly raised in the quest to revitalize patristic exegesis for contemporary biblical interpretation. The disposition and attitudes of the Fathers indicate that their conservatism was due to the fact that they were not private individuals alone with their text. They were (largely) bishops of the church who transcended their own time and place. Hence they listened to the voice of those who had gone on ahead of them. One must be quiet in order to read rightly. Obviously this raises the issue of tradition, which Hall treats briefly but circumspectly. Finally, Hall summarizes four operative hermeneutical principles that governed the reading of the Fathers: 1) read the Bible holistically; 2) read the Bible christologically; 3) read the Bible communally, with Christ's

body, the church; 4) read the Bible within the context and practice of prayer, worship, and spiritual formation. The remaining distance between the fathers and the contemporary reader of the Bible (liberal or evangelical) lies in the fact that these four principles are so alien to us. This book does a good job in beginning to close the gap. Hopefully the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* will amply illustrate Hall's claim of patristic wisdom, and will justify his evident enthusiasm for patristic commentary.¹

William C. Weinrich

ERASMUS, THE ANABAPTISTS, AND THE GREAT COMMISSION. By Abraham Friesen. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

For years, scholars have alleged that Christian humanists, especially Desiderius Erasmus, influenced Anabaptists in the sixteenth century. However, no historian has made this connection as explicitly and exhaustively as Abraham Friesen does in this volume. The book centers on Erasmus's interpretation of the Great Commission in which Christ commanded his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20). Friesen argues that Erasmus's unique interpretation of the Great Commission greatly affected the Anabaptists' understanding of believers' baptism and their theology as a whole.

Friesen's project entails a fascinating study of the various interpretations of the Great Commission in church history. While many Christians today associate this passage with missions, such was not always the case. During the Arian controversy in the early church, this text was important because it contained the only biblical command that baptism be administered in the name of the Trinity. This presented a problem, for, according to Acts, the apostles repeatedly baptized persons in the name of Jesus only. This apparent discrepancy caused an interpretive debate among the Church Fathers

¹The Missouri Synod is especially honored to have four editors of the individual volumes of ACCS on its seminary faculties. From Concordia Theological Seminary there is Dean O. Wenthe (Jeremiah), Arthur A. Just (Luke), and William C. Weinrich (Revelation). From Concordia Seminary there is Quentin Wesselschmidt (Psalms).

that has yet to be definitively resolved. Consequently, exegetes for centuries interpreted the Great Commission chiefly as a reference to the Trinity, not as a missionary command.

Erasmus offered a new interpretation of this passage. As part of his attempt to reinvestigate the scriptures within their historical contexts, Erasmus explored what the Great Commission meant to the apostles, not what it meant to the later Church Fathers. In his biblical paraphrases on Matthew, Erasmus emphasized that the Great Commission commanded the apostles first to "make disciples" and then to baptize them. This interpretation forbade the baptism of infants and the use of baptism as a converting sacrament. For Erasmus, baptism was an external rite that signified internal conversion, not a means of salvation (pages 50-51). He supported this interpretation with his paraphrases on the baptismal passages in Acts, especially chapters 2, 8, 10, and 19. In his view, these passages depicted the apostles' obedience to the Great Commission through teaching the essential beliefs of the Christian faith, converting their hearers, and then baptizing the converts. Thus, like in the Great Commission, these baptismal passages emphasized the making of disciples first, and baptism second. Taking this interpretation as his point of departure, Friesen documents the numerous Anabaptist citations of Erasmus's interpretation in the sixteenth century, demonstrating that it was a major theme in Anabaptist thought, especially prominent in Menno's 1539 *Fundamentboek* and the works of several Swiss and South German Anabaptists.

Along the way, Friesen defends both Erasmus and the Anabaptists against claims that they were "undogmatic" thinkers. While some historians judge Erasmus as one who disregarded the theological intricacies of the Reformation in favor of the "simple Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount," interpreters tend to label Anabaptists as radicals who diffused Christian dogma into ethics and discipleship (pages 43-44). Friesen's study questions these views. In their adoption of Erasmus's interpretation of the Great Commission, Anabaptists asserted the importance of Christian dogma, for they baptized believers only after they had accepted the essential teachings of the church. Here Friesen points out that the Anabaptists did not oppose the theological arguments of the Reformers. Instead, these radicals only criticized the magisterial Reformers for not bringing their institutional churches into conformity with their theology (page 100). Like Erasmus, many Anabaptists accepted basic

Christian doctrines, and they did so through their interpretations of the Great Commission. In highlighting this theological emphasis, Friesen presents a balanced assessment of Anabaptist thought. While most Anabaptists did focus on practical rather than speculative questions, those who followed Erasmus's interpretation of the Great Commission also affirmed the theological convictions that provided the framework for the life of discipleship.

Friesen's argument is cogent, well written, and engaging on several levels. For those attracted to the history of biblical interpretation, Friesen presents a good case study in his examination of some contrasting perspectives on the Great Commission. Interpreters of Erasmus will find in this book a revisionist picture that dispels the "liberal" assessment of the great humanist and highlights the biblical foundations of his theology. However, the book is most valuable for its reassessment of Anabaptist origins. By explicitly demonstrating the influence of Erasmus on the Radical Reformation, Friesen clarifies the Anabaptists' place in their intellectual milieu.

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HENRY MELCHIOR MUHLENBERG: THE ROOTS OF 250 YEARS OF ORGANIZED LUTHERANISM IN NORTH AMERICA. Essays in Memory of Helmut T. Lehman. Edited by John W. Kleiner. *Studies in Religion and Society* Volume 41. Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998. xii + 164 pages. 79.95

This welcome addition to American Lutheran literature stems from a 1992 conference that recognized the 250th anniversary of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's arrival in North America from Germany (by way of England). When coupled with recent issues of the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* and the *Lutheran Quarterly*, as well as scattered articles in both of these journals, one sees clearly that the interpretation of the life, work, and thought of Muhlenberg is alive and well at the end of the 20th century.

What is it that makes Muhlenberg such an intriguing figure for historians to study? Certainly it is not his theological corpus—he produced only one piece that approaches the category of serious theological literature (a defense of Pietism—the remainder of his

legacy lies in his mission reports to Halle and his correspondence). The answer lies, instead, in the title of the first paper of the book: "Henry Melchior Muhlenberg: Orthodox Pietist." In this piece, A. G. Roeber of Penn State University briefly examines Muhlenberg historiography, as well as Muhlenberg's personal conception of church history. In the end, Roeber concludes, "It seems relatively clear that Muhlenberg remained throughout his life a moderate pietist within the bounds of a confessional Lutheranism" (page 6). The strength of the piece lies in Roeber's willingness to allow Muhlenberg to speak for himself and to permit the seeming contradictions to stand. Put another way, was Muhlenberg a hopeless Pietist, or a Pietist for whom there was hope? Roeber, it seems, affirms the latter.

Other articles do not reach the high standard raised by Roeber. Jeff Johnson's "Muhlenberg's Relationship to African-Americans" is a case in point. Here Johnson displays some significant historiographical lapses, particularly his penchant toward anachronism. He applies the ethical, sociological, and philosophical conclusions of the present to Muhlenberg and then condemns him for not measuring up to them, rating him as "condescending, paternalistic, and racist" (page 25). Johnson specifically faults Muhlenberg for not actively condemning "slavery as an institution, to say nothing of attempting to abolish it" (page 26). Michael Cobbler's response corrects Johnson's misreading of Muhlenberg by unpacking not only the significant comments made by Muhlenberg regarding slavery, but also the context in which they were made and the way that Muhlenberg related to slaves over the course of his ministry. In the end, while allowing Muhlenberg to be a man of his time and certainly not excusing his lack of action, Cobbler also notes the significant ways that Muhlenberg challenged the assumptions of the American colonies in the mid-eighteenth century. In other words, if Muhlenberg's views on slavery are worth studying – and they may not be due to the paucity of sources – then Cobblers' conclusions will have to be addressed, while Johnson's work will lend little to the ongoing discussion.

Faith Rohrbough's piece, "The Political Maturation of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg," strives to periodize Muhlenberg's understanding of and relationship to the American scene. Was Muhlenberg against, neutral, or assimilated to the developing American republic? Rohrbough divides Muhlenberg's time in

America into three parts: 1) the young immigrant; 2) the Patriarch of American Lutheranism; and 3) the retiree forced to flee the revolutionary conflict in Philadelphia. The picture that emerges is that of an increasingly passive Muhlenberg at odds with a developing democratic political scene, to which he finally capitulated. Rohrbough's argument is not completely compelling, as commentator Samuel Zeiser demonstrates. He points out a consistency to Muhlenberg's response to specific pastoral challenges throughout his ministry – he dealt with them in an authoritarian manner!

In the end, the volume is a helpful model of the historiographical enterprise. The other articles – Mark Oldenburg's "The 1748 Liturgy and the 1786 Hymnal," Marianne Woheck's "The Desert is Vast and the Sheep are Dispersed: Muhlenberg's Views of the Immigrant Church," and Peter Stebbins Craig's "The Relationship Between Swedish and German Churchmen in the Muhlenberg Era" – are all quite solid. As a collection, this volume shows clearly how each historian brings personal assumptions to the task, as well as the manner in which those assumptions color his or her interpretation. How else are we to explain how people dealing with precisely the same historical facts come to such radically different conclusions. The volume tempers the notion of a purely scientific, objective history, which was itself, after all, a product of rationalism.

Finally, an excellent piece on "Archival Resources for Muhlenberg Research" by John Peterson of the Lutheran Archives Center at Philadelphia, along with a truncated (books only) bibliography, round out the book.

Two criticisms, however, remain. First, the book lacks what I believe is a necessary part of any Muhlenberg discussion, namely the nineteenth-century battle over his legacy. Missing is any discussion of the war between S. S. Schmucker, B. Kurtz and the American Lutherans, and the Confessionalists led by Charles Porterfield Krauth, each of which tried to claim Muhlenberg for their own. Second, even with Mellen's discounts for pastors, this volume is still fairly steeply priced. However, if one is interested in the history of American Lutheranism, this volume is quite helpful. Further, the articles in this collection will aid one in deciphering Pietism's sometimes overt and sometimes subtle presence in American Lutheranism. Obviously more might be said regarding this seminal figure in American Lutheran history. Missourians generally retreat

to the too easy dismissal ("Pietist!") or too easy acceptance ("Missions!") to consider fully the remarkable narrative of this intriguing historical figure. The answers are not always easy, but the adventure is worth the effort.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

ONE RIGHT READING? A GUIDE TO IRENAEUS. By Mary Ann Donovan. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997. X + 197 Pages. Paper. \$18.95.

For the scholar of the early church Irenaeus remains a major source of interest. He incorporates materials into his discussion that are clearly primitive, reflecting the first decades of the second century and perhaps even earlier (Jerusalem based?) traditions. He provides, given the loss of Justin Martyr material, the earliest listing and description of the early heresies, and he provides the first synthetic attempt to place the biblical material of the Old and New Testaments into an interwoven, theological whole. Moreover, Irenaeus provides early evidence of items of interest to scholars: rule of faith, early hermeneutical processes, the idea of tradition and succession of bishops, sacramental ideas, and also a thorough-going presentation of primitive chiliasm.

Irenaeus remains important and has become crucial for the church's reflection on its present context. The fractured collapse of the unity of doctrine, the unity of worship, the unity of creed, the unity of biblical understanding, the unity of practice, even the unity of Christian ethics make the present situation of the church much more like the second century than, say, the sixteenth. That we seek our spiritual unity in the heart, in the soul, in faith, simply reflects the gnostic spiritualizing which runs rampant in modern society and church. Irenaeus' insistence on God the Creator of the material world as the one and only God lies at the basis of everything he says and thinks. Hence, the centrality of Israel's history, its cult, the law, Moses and the prophets; hence the centrality of the incarnation, the miracles of Jesus, the death and fleshly resurrection of Jesus; hence also—and this perhaps the most important in these present days—the centrality of the concrete, fleshly, and sacramental reality of the church, the place of the Spirit until the eschatological consummation.

This book by Mary Ann Donovan, Professor at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, California, provides a welcome introductory guide to the reading of Irenaeus' chief work, the five books of the *Expose and Overthrow of What Is Falsely Called Knowledge*, more commonly called simply *Against the Heresies*.

"The intent of this book is to serve as a companion to the reader of *Adversus haereses*. It is not a commentary but a reader's guide. As such it offers an introduction to the intricacies of the "Irenaeian style, explains the content of his thought with attention to his major contributions, and points out areas that have been the focus of scholarly interest. The aim is to present clearly and concisely what Irenaeus says, following the order of his argument" (page 4).

Those who are familiar with the work of Mary Ann Donovan will know that this intent will be exercised with a thorough understanding of Irenaeus, with a diligent scholarship conversant with the secondary literature, with a broad knowledge of the second century, and, I would add, with a clear eye for the center of Irenaeian concerns. In her introduction to *Against the Heresies 4* (which begins Irenaeus' own attempt to construct a coherent theology), Donovan notes that the value that Irenaeus places on materiality is the primary difference with the Gnostics in the interpretation of the Scriptures (page 97). That is exactly correct and reflects the fact that the doctrinal assertion that the one and only God is the Creator of the material world governs how Irenaeus will read and understand the Scriptures.

Of course, *Against the Heresies* is a presentation of the Scriptures rightly understood against the false understanding of the Scriptures by the Gnostics. Irenaeus is a biblical thinker whose central concern is the hermeneutic enterprise. Donovan knows this and keeps her discussion focused on this central issue: "The Scriptures belong to the Christian community in such a way that any valid interpretation must be consistent with the faith of the community, and authoritative interpretation of the faith for [Irenaeus] includes authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures. In this sense there is but one right reading" (page 61). Hence, the question of the book's title, "One Right Reading?" is answered with a loud "Yes," and to understand this "Yes" is the reason to read Irenaeus. In this task, Donovan's book is helpful and illuminating as an introduction and guide.

Unfortunately, on occasion Donovan uses the specious language of fem-speak. The attempt to avoid masculine language for God at times scars her translations. For example, a couple of times she uses "Godself" to avoid "Himself." So Donovan: "Irenaeus ends AH IV.20.1 with an announcement of the text to be commented on, remarking that God made all things 'from Godself'" (page 116). The Latin text actually reads, "*Ipsa a semetipso substantiam creaturam . . .*" *Ipsa* is a masculine singular pronoun, and the text actually translates: "He Himself made from Himself the substance of creaturely things" (see also page 84). One might simply shrug this linguistic nonsense off as a minor blight on an otherwise excellent book. And for the most part that is all it is. However, there arises a real interpretive issue when Donovan insists on translating the Latin *homo* with "humankind" (pages 81, 83, 106). In AH III.16.3, Irenaeus writes (Donovan's translation): "that he might be first-born from the dead as he was first-born of all creatures, the Son of God made Son of humankind, that through him we might receive the adoption, humankind bearing and taking hold of and embracing the Son of God." Both instances here of "humankind" render the Latin *homo* in the text. Donovan defends this translation: "the comparison is between God and 'man' in the generic sense, a sense made even clearer by the first person plural form of the verb *percipio* ['receive']" (page 90, note 3). However, Irenaeus does not know of humanity in any generic sense. He knows of humanity "in Adam" and of humanity "in Christ." To translate *homo* by "humankind" makes abstract and non-concrete what Irenaeus conceives concretely and personally. Donovan compromises the particularity of Irenaeus' recapitulation doctrine by this translation, as is evident in the following translation: "In all things, moreover, is humankind molded by God; therefore he also recapitulated humankind in himself" (page 81; see also 83, 106).

Nonetheless, for those starting in Irenaeus and desiring a good guide, this is a welcome addition. Donovan provides a good, but not exhaustive bibliography to assist in further reading.

William C. Weinrich

UNION AND CONFESSION. By Herman Sasse. Translated by Matthew C. Harrison. *Christ and His Church: Essays by Herman Sasse, Volume 1*, edited by Ronald R. Feuerhahn, Matthew C. Harrison, and Paul T. McCain. St. Louis: Office of the President, The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, 1997. xii + 58 pages.

Dr. A. L. Barry, president of the LCMS, is to be congratulated on providing for the church one of the more important essays by one of the most important confessional Lutherans of our century, Dr. Herman Sasse. In *Union and Confession* we see Sasse at his best as he poses questions to both the church of his time and ours.

Sasse's genius in this piece lies in the way he brings together doctrinal and historical arguments to challenge the contemporary church. Take, for example, the following quote: "It is the deplorable consequence of the obvious ignorance of our pastors in individual churches of Germany regarding nineteenth-century church history, that when the church struggle of 1933 broke out, the great church struggles of the past were not immediately before their eyes" (pages 25-26).

Sasse brings a fresh perspective to the question of Church and Office and puts his finger on the issue for modern Missouri when he writes: "Here it is bluntly said that there is one inclusive German Evangelical Church. It is the sum of individual congregations. These congregations are of various confessional origins and accountability, but they share an essential unity in the faith so that they can, in the present situation, confess as one" (page 29). Some later translators of Walther open up a potential for atomizing of the church — turning it into a voluntary association of like-minded believers, rather than the sacramental community gathered by God's Spirit through Word and Sacrament. For example, J. T. Mueller's description of the church as an aggregate of believers in his translation of Walther's *Kirche und Amt* implies that the church is created by the free choice of individual human beings. The very practical result of the voluntary principle is that it allows, at least in part, for the great disparity in doctrine and practice in the LCMS of the late twentieth century. As Sasse appropriately notes: "What good does it do to maintain the confessional position, what good is it to carry out doctrinal discipline in a Lutheran territorial church (if the pastors are indeed bound to the confession), if other entities which are teaching within the domain of the church concerned, and at times teaching very effectively, are bound to no doctrinal norm? . . . The moment both

Evangelical churches were no longer able to say what separated them, remarkably they also lost the ability to withstand enthusiasm with a clearly confessed word" (pages 40, 41). Sasse anticipates the problem for late 20th-century Lutherans in America as they struggle for unity within their own church bodies. "To this we pose the question, under what circumstances and how long then can orthodox Christians in general remain together in one church with Arians and Pelagians? According to the basic principles of our church we would answer that erring brothers should be borne in love in the hope that they will repent and return to the truth, but that false doctrine must not be tolerated. If false teachers crept their way into the church, they must be opposed. This struggle must also be waged against a church government which protects false teachers and thus makes itself a participant in their evil works" (page 20). Advocates of the Church Growth Movement, still selling their wares with great acceptance in our Synod, push for numbers as defining the church. This is nothing other than another example of a theology of glory. Sasse answers otherwise: "The matter does not depend upon how many or how few confess the doctrines of the Reformation, but rather whether these doctrines are still preached and believed. As long as this happens, the old churches of the Reformation era are still a reality" (page 45). Sasse has the answers for us – now all we need to do is listen to him!

Criticisms of the book deal for the most part with matters of format. First, it is unfortunate that the editors have chosen to use endnotes as opposed to footnotes. This reviewer hopes to see this changed in future volumes. Second, it might have been helpful to expand some of the notes to provide the reader with more context. Editorial notes tend for the most part to be descriptive, not substantive. For example, on page 43 Sasse writes: "Dorner, Nitzsch, and Julius Mueller did this. Their attempts may be read." A note at this point would be very helpful in pointing the reader to the appropriate sources, at least in general. Instead we are treated to the blatantly obvious, as, for example in note 40 when the translator cites AC X. Surely most readers of this volume can decipher the Latin *improbant secus docentest* from their English edition of the Book of Concord! Finally, at times the translation is a bit rough, as is the case on page 31, which reads: "Already today no one any longer ascribes to it the epoch-making significance which those who produced it, in particular its real author, Karl Barth, gave it." Surely a little more strenuous editing is in order!

In the end, however, these are mere quibbles in the light of this significant piece of confessional Lutheran material. The editors, and especially Pastor Harrison, are to be commended for bringing this marvelous confession of the historic Lutheran faith to our contemporary situation. Let us hope we see further examples of confessional literature of this sort emanating from our President's Office.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

MARTIN LUTHER: LEARNING FOR LIFE. By Marilyn J. Harran. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997.

Today's educational system grapples not only with the Information Age, but also with the dire need of reform. This situation provides the impetus for Marilyn Harran to reconsider Martin Luther and the Reformation era so that parents and educators might glean from them something that they can apply to today. Dr. Harran sets forth three goals: (1) to present an historical account of Martin Luther's own educational experience; (2) to analyze how it affected his views on education, both within the church and in society in general; and (3) to affirm and apply any of "Luther's educational goals and pedagogies" that are relevant for today. The former two goals are accomplished ably, while the presentation of the third lacks depth of study and insight with only short remarks thrown sporadically into the historical review and a short concluding chapter. Dr. Harran's intended audience is "general readers," and the book is eminently readable. And, with the exception of some untranslated Greek, Latin, and German phrases untranslated (in the text or footnotes), she meets her goal.

Dr. Harran's presentation of Luther's educational experience reflects ample use of primary documents and recent Luther scholarship. She begins with the education of Martin Luther, the boy, which, though at times harsh, prepared him well for the rigors of his later life as Doctor and Reformer of the Church. She continues with Luther at the university where he received his training in the Aristotelian scholasticism of the day, especially the nominalism of the Occamist school, against which he would later react strenuously. Nevertheless, Luther's university training in logic and dialectic served him well in his later disputations. At the university also, Luther came into contact with the increasingly significant humanism of the day.

Harran's discussion of Luther's anguished struggle for righteousness and his accompanying theological growth is noteworthy. Besides Luther's discovery of the imputed righteousness of God in the pages of Scripture, Harran posits that it was Luther's "independent attitude toward various authorities, from nominalism to mysticism to humanism," and his desire "to follow his own unique path that was guided above all by Scripture" that set him apart from other theologians before him. Moreover, the significant influence of his friend and colleague, Philip Melancthon helped nurture Luther's love of history and the biblical languages. Thus Luther's educational reforms in the university incorporated emphases on theology (the Bible and classical texts) and the arts (languages, history, and mathematics, among others). And these reforms that met with much success.

Luther, according to Dr. Harran, recognized the importance of educating all youth and vigorously encouraged the same, even to the point that if parents neglected their duty to a child, the state should step in and educate him. In this arena, though, given the dire state of education among the German peasants, Luther's reforms were not as successful as at the university. Dr. Harran is not as critical of Luther's inefficacies as other recent authors, pointing out mitigating circumstances and pointing to signs of improvement.

Overall, this book is easy to read and presents a detailed and scholarly history of Luther and his educational experiences and reforms. The reader is left, though, to apply Luther's principles to the contemporary situation. Given the state of education today, the reader should have no trouble doing that.

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CHURCH HISTORY: AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE. By Justo L. Gonzalez. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.

Gonzalez points out that one of the main difficulties that beginning students face when entering into the study of church history is the lack of a global vision of the field. This truncated vision, according to Gonzalez, is illustrated by students being unaware of even the general chronology of church history, which results in difficulty distinguishing between what is fundamental and what is secondary. This negatively reduces the study of history into an exercise of

simply memorizing details. Students never form a global vision, fail to develop a broader perspective, and thus cannot interpret the significance of past events as they affect the present.

This book was written in order to serve as a way of supplying beginning students a "bird's eye view" or skeleton, so that they do not have to take their first journey through church history without a guide. As such the book is not meant to be, or to take the place of a traditional textbook. Rather, it is meant to be a map so that students can enjoy the scenery of church history without fear of getting lost.

Gonzalez divides church history into nine chronological periods from Ancient Christianity to the Twentieth Century and the End of Modernity. Each of these chapters introduces the reader to the most significant events, people, and ideas of the period covered. The coverage is not deep, but it is wide so that the book does not end up being overly focused on any one continent. For example, the coverage of the Reformation period includes not only the events going on in Europe, but also the impact the church had on the early exploration of the New World.

Each chapter also features a short bibliography of suggested readings made up of the books most often used in survey courses in colleges, universities, and seminaries in the United States. It is suggested that this book be used in conjunction with at least one of the recommended texts.

As a whole *Church History: An Essential Guide* accomplishes its goal to serve as a map, but it must be remembered that this is all that this book is meant to be. It only serves to introduce the field of church history in skeletal form, there is no analysis offered. Hopefully it will awaken in readers the desire for further study, the desire for analysis, the desire to put flesh on the skeleton.

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THE GERMANIZATION OF EARLY MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY: A SOCIOHISTORICAL APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION. By James C. Russell. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. 258 pages.

This book is actually a revision of the author's 1990 doctoral dissertation in historical theology at Fordham University.

Unfortunately, the main thrust of the book is the subtitle. This book is built on the rather shaky foundations of "metahistory" and sociological patterns. For the uninitiated, "metahistory" is an attempt "to establish and systematically apply a paradigm to major historical developments" (page 3). The metahistorian examines patterns in other societies, develops models, and then fills in the gaps in historical data on the basis of the model. Using this method, Russell hopes to compare the Christianization of the Germanic peoples to that of the pre-Christian Roman society.

Russell suggests a connection between Christianization efforts in Germany and mission work in the modern era. He contends that a "folk or natural religion" society is less open to Christianity than a society acquainted with "universal, prophetic, or revealed religions." Folk religion, according to Russell, centers in and identifies with the popular community, while universal religions focus on the salvation of the individual and doctrinal truths. The Germanic people had many folk religions when the Christian missionaries came. In many cases Christianity was looked upon either as another way of benefiting the folk community or doing harm to it. Russell notes that the church failed to catechize these new communities as thoroughly as in earlier generations, which resulted in a "superficial" or "nominal" Christianization (page 212). Here is a strong warning for the contemporary church and its mission efforts: speed and *eschatological urgency* (page 213) should not take precedence over training up a child in the way he should go.

Russell develops patterns in other societies to explain how the Christianization process took place. However, this fails to take any account of the work of the Holy Spirit. Conversion is viewed as an activity of men upon their fellow men rather than the result of the Spirit of God working through the Word of God. Yet, as one reads this discussion of social cause and effect it is hard not to draw a parallel to activities in the church today. If sociological features are the key to conversion, then those who argue for "user-friendly liturgy and hymnody" and a "more positive Christianity" are correct. Russell observes that Christianity was being reinterpreted "in accordance with the world-view of the Germanic peoples" (page 212). Is not this the same problem being raised by those who chant the mantra of evangelism and missions to justify changes in church practices? Missionaries did not intentionally try to change the teaching of the church, neither do many of the well-intentioned

today, but the long-term effects of medieval missionary efforts require a closer look.

Russell has done the service of identifying the need to learn from history. Failure to look seriously at the intensive missionary labors of the medieval period may have come back to haunt the church. While these insights are appreciated, the book is very superficial in many respects. The author readily admits lack of documentation at times and confesses the need for more historical data about the conversion of the common people.

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WHERE EARTH MEETS HEAVEN: A COMMENTARY ON REVELATION. By John G. Strelan. Adelaide, Australia: Open Book Publishers, 1994. 402 Pages. Paper.

As we approach the start of a new millennium, interest in the Book of Revelation has continued to grow. Lutherans that tune into Christian radio and television are sometimes lured into some of the false teachings that are supposedly being drawn from Revelation, whether it has to do with a 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth after his return or the identification of the person who bears the number 666. There is a need for pastors to guide their members through the complexities of Revelation and to suggest resources for further study. This volume, written by a seasoned Lutheran pastor and professor of the Lutheran Church of Australia, is a fine non-technical and theologically sound verse-by-verse commentary on the English text of Revelation.

Strelan's commentary has several strengths. First, he properly emphasizes that Revelation unveils God's view of reality: "Revelation urges Christians to put on God's glasses, to take another look at reality, to see things as God sees them" (page 11). He notes that this apocalypse is not a revelation that solely consists of eschatology or end time realities, but is a view from God's perspective of all reality: past, present, and future. Revelation is not bound to a linear depiction of time and events. For example, the worship of God and the Lamb depicted in Revelation 4-5 is not a specific event in time; it is an ongoing reality.

The focus on the centrality of worship in Revelation is a second great strength of this commentary. Unlike the many liturgically

bankrupt books on Revelation, Strelan's brief introduction and ongoing exposition of this theme is brilliant. This worship is not only "up there" and future. Strelan properly knits the "earthly" worship of the church as a "participation in the heavenly liturgy" depicted throughout Revelation (page 95). Therefore, rather than seeing worship as an escape from reality and this world, Strelan highlights how worship "defines and reveals reality" (page 16). It is the ongoing worship in Revelation that continually reminds the reader that he must always interpret the chaos of sin in light of the ever present and real victory of the Lamb.

A third strength of Strelan's exegesis is his sensitivity to the prominence of Christ in the various scenes of Revelation. In addition to the Lamb Christology in chapters 4-7, Revelation contains several depictions of Christ where his appearance has some angelic characteristics or he is even specifically labeled an "angel." Although there is little debate about the scenes where the identity of the figure is explicit (for example, 1:12-16; 14:14-16; 19:11-16), there is significant debate about whether other exalted angelomorphic figures are Christ (especially 10:1-11, but also 7:2-3; 18:1-3; 20:1-3). Many Christians get nervous with any talk of Christ as an angel, but not Strelan. He correctly emphasizes that the background for this Christology is found in the Old Testament theophanies where YHWH took the form of an angel. Therefore, the angelomorphic depictions of Christ in Revelation are not asserting that Christ is a created angel, but are reflecting that He is the visible manifestation of YHWH.

There is some room for disagreement, however, with aspects of Strelan's treatment of Christ's angelomorphic appearances in Revelation. First, one should exercise care in the number of angels that are identified as Christ. Although his Christological identification of the angel who seals in Revelation 7:2-3 and the mighty angel in Revelation 18:1-3 are questionable, his identification of Michael in Revelation 12:7-11 as Christ is especially problematic. In spite of the fact that distinguished Lutheran interpreters like Martin Luther and George Stoeckhardt have made the same assertion, there is not strong textual support for this conclusion. The other angelomorphic portraits of Christ in Revelation have some kind of clear indicator of His divinity in the visual depiction; Revelation 12:7 give no visual portrait of Michael. The action of Michael commanding other angels who together throw Satan out of

heaven is seen by some interpreters as indicating Michael's divinity, but it is better understood as God's action carried out by His angelic army commanded by His archangel. It must be noted that Revelation does not depict this action as the source of victory over Satan; the Lamb—not Michael—is praised for the victory over Satan (Revelation 12:10-12). Furthermore, based upon the prominence of Michael as an archangel distinct from YHWH in Jewish apocalyptic literature, most Jewish Christians hearing Revelation 12:7-11 would not have understood Michael to be Christ. The title/name from Daniel that John uses to identify Christ is "one like a son of man," not Michael (1:13; 14:14; one may compare Daniel 7:13).

The prominence of Divine Name theology in Revelation is also not addressed adequately. For example, Strelan mentions that "it borders on blasphemy to think that we might be able even to guess" the hidden name of Christ alluded to in Revelation 19:13 (page 321). This text is a reference to Christ as the theophanic angel who possesses the Divine Name YHWH and is YHWH's visible form or image (one may compare Exodus 23:20-21). Although Christ's hidden name is not naturally known by sinful humans, Christ has revealed to his followers that he possesses the Divine Name (one may compare John 5:43; 17:11, 26). Furthermore, as one who appreciates the sacraments, Strelan should not have passed by several opportunities to emphasize the baptismal significance of the various references to the name or seal that the saints bear on their foreheads (for example, 3:12; 7:2; 14:1; 22:4).

Pastors and scholars who may be frustrated by the lack of detailed discussion and footnotes concerning where to search elsewhere should remember this book is written for laity. It is an excellent reference volume for a church library. The clarity of its witness to Jesus Christ will serve his Bride well as she now participates in the heavenly liturgy while awaiting the final marriage celebration.

Charles A. Gieschen

TESTING THE BOUNDARIES: WINDOWS TO LUTHERAN IDENTITY. By Charles P. Arand. Concordia Scholarship Today Series. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995. 268 pages. Paper.

The subject of this book is the status of the Book of Concord among the Lutheran synods in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The book analyzes the leading theologians of each synod

in terms of their view of the nature and extent of confessional subscription. The chapters are organized by synods and include the General Synod, the General Council, the Missouri Synod, the Iowa Synod, the United Lutheran Church in America, and the Lutheran Church in America. Because of its broad scope and objective tone, Arand's book has immense, and perhaps incomparable, value as a *Dogmengeschichte* of American Lutheranism.

Arand has performed yeoman's service to the American Lutheran Churches by boiling down their stew of theologians into two camps (pages 14-17). On the one hand are those theologians who saw the Lutheran confessions as being historically conditioned and therefore useful only as "true witnesses to the gospel." This is the official position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA Constitution, 2.05 & 2.06). On the other hand are those theologians who saw the Lutheran confessions as enduring doctrinal norms, because they are a "true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God." This is the official position of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS Constitution II).

Can these two camps be reconciled? Arand states that "both views of the Confessions could be maintained in a dynamic tension if the Lutheran Confessions are considered in light of their hermeneutical role relative to Scripture" (page 266). Arand believes that he has found a mediating position incorporating both the "historically conditioned" and the "enduring norm" views of the Confessions. Despite his attempt to find middle ground, Arand himself is still firmly in the "enduring norm" camp, as revealed by his conclusion "The Confessions have value as hermeneutics or maps because of their congruence with and correspondence to the reality" (page 266).

Arand assumes that there is an objective and enduring theological reality, which is the thing to which his confessional "maps" point. His dialogue partners, for example, Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson, do not share this assumption. In their theological world, "reality" is subjective and fluid, or in their words, "existential." To them confessions can only serve as a "compass" in a changing sea of ice floes. A map and a compass are different tools for different realities.

The great tragedy of American Lutheranism today is that most of its theologians have been bewitched by the relativistic philosophies of historicism and existentialism. What American Lutheranism needs now is a critical analysis of modern historicized theologies. Until the

assumptions of the principle of "historical conditioning" are laid bare, American Lutheranism will continue to be hopelessly divided in spite of Arand's best hopes.

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