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## Book Reviews

***Whether It Can Be Proven the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist: Francis Turretin's Seventh Disputation.* By Francis Turretin. Translated by Kenneth Bubb. Edited by Rand Windburn. Protestant Reformatin Publications. Forestville, California, 1999. x+130 pages. \$15.00.**

As Reformation Day A.D. 1999 approached, the Lutheran World Federation, and hence its member body the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, stood poised to sign the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* with the Roman Catholic Church. Not surprisingly, there is little mention from these two bodies of Luther's claim that the pope is the Antichrist. "This [the doctrine of papal supremacy] is a powerful demonstration that the pope is the real Antichrist who has raised himself over and set himself against Christ, for the pope will not permit Christians to be saved except by his own power, which amounts to nothing since it is neither established nor commanded by God" (SA II, IV:10). Even the more irenic Melancthon clearly links the papacy with the Antichrist (Tr 39): "But it is manifest that the Roman pontiffs and their adherents defend godless doctrines and godless forms of worship, and it is plain that the marks of the Antichrist coincide with those of the pope's kingdom and his followers."

The Reformed tradition accepted the Lutheran argument that the pope is the Antichrist. One of the more able treatments of the subject from the pen of an American proceeded from Princeton Seminary's Charles Hodge (*Systematic Theology*, 3 volumes [London and Edinburg: Thomas Nelson and Sons; New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871], 3:813-832). Hodge saw himself as no innovator, however. He simply sought to repriminate the Reformed theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hodge anticipated the problem many Americans would have with Reformed scholasticism—the language barrier would prove insurmountable. Indeed, translations of "orthodox" Reformed theology of the post-Reformation period are as illusive as those of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

That brings us to the present book. It is a partial translation of Francis Turretin's *Concerning Our Necessary Secession from the Church of Rome and the Impossibility of Cooperation with Her*, published about 1661. François Turretini (1623-1687) was one of the most able defenders of Dortian Orthodoxy, better known among Lutherans as "Five-point Calvinism" or "Tulip Theology." His most important work, *Institutio theologiae elencticae* (Three parts, Geneva, 1679-1685), has recently appeared in English translation as *Institutes of Elenctic*

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*Theology*.<sup>1</sup> Now another of his significant doctrinal treatises has appeared. *Whether It Can Be Proven the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist* is a biblical/systematic treatment that affirms that the pope is the Antichrist.

Turretin assembles a bevy of scriptural, philosophical, and social arguments to support his contention. Some arguments will sound familiar to Lutheran ears, for example, that the "pope rules as God in the place of God" as testified to in the Scripture. Further, Turretin notes that apostasy is a key trait and that the pope's adversarial nature opposes Christ. Other arguments are more derivative/historical in nature. For example, Turretin finds evidence for the pope's character as the Antichrist in the "common opinion of Protestants." Here he cites the more significant Reformed Confessions (the Helvetic, Belgic, Scottish, and Anglican, among others), as well as the Augsburg Confession and the Magdeburg Centuries from the Lutheran tradition.

Turretin brings all together to bolster his conclusion that separation from the Church of Rome is a confessional necessity. "Having been persuaded that the pope is the Antichrist, and since truly it is clear from the words of Scripture that this be so, we must conclude that our secession from his communion is consummately necessary and that it is quite impossible that there be a reconciliation between us, if things so remain as they are" (113).

Now the question that faces the present-day reader presents itself. Why is Turretin's conclusion that the pope is the Antichrist, which was a clear confession of the Reformed Tradition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, essentially unknown in the American Protestantism of today? After all, American Protestantism certainly has its roots in the Reformed Tradition. Part of the undoing of Turretin's conclusion is embedded within his own argument. Put another way, while Turretin is fully convinced that the office of the papacy is, in fact, the Antichrist, one of the key arguments he develops to prove his point centers in the issue of fulfilled prophecy. Put simply, do the Scriptures speak of a future fulfillment of prophecy in regard to the Antichrist, or have such prophecies been fulfilled historically. Turretin affirms the latter. However, he does so by adopting an important medieval hermeneutic. The key to the

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<sup>1</sup>translated by George M. Giger, edited by James T. Dennison Jr., 3 volumes (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1992-1997).

interpretation of prophecy for Turretin is the so-called "Year-Day Principle"; namely, that when the prophetic sections of the Scriptures speak of a "day," the interpreter must properly read "year." Futurists, according to Turretin, see the forty-two months of Revelation 13:5 and the 1260 days of Revelation 12:6 as literal days. Such is not the case, for "this explanation is erroneous because the Scripture is not speaking of natural days, consistent with the literal meaning of the term 'day,' but instead speaking mystically of *prophetic days* which represent the number of years" (104). In the technical language of modern prophecy interpretation, Turretin is an historicist. However, his method—the Year-Day theory—has become the chosen hermeneutic of futurist premillennialists—those who believe that the prophecies of the Bible are yet to be fulfilled. Put another way, loosed from the constraints of the historicist claim that the papacy is the identifiable Antichrist—because the papacy fulfills the prophecies of the Scriptures—futurists have looked to the unfolding future (that is, the present) to identify the emerging Antichrist. In a sense, then, the pope *cannot* be the Antichrist for the futurist—the revelation of the Antichrist remains a coming event. Hence, American Protestants have delightedly expended their energy in identifying the Antichrist.<sup>2</sup>

Still, Turretin's little treatise is a fascinating glimpse into the theology of the Reformed Tradition. In the end this little volume underscores the long-standing differences in theological method between orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition and Lutheranism; though the language used by the two traditions is similar, the meaning attached to such language differs significantly.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

**Hermann Sasse: A Man For Our Times?** Edited by John R. Stephenson and Thomas M. Winger. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999.

This collection of essays, delivered at Saint Catharine's Sasse Symposium in the fall of 1995, is a *tour de force* on both the theology and life of Hermann Sasse, one of the most remarkable confessing

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<sup>2</sup>One may see Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall be no More: Prophecy Belief in American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

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Lutherans of our century. Reading Sasse is a theological-historical journey through the struggles of Lutheranism, particularly since the Prussian Union. There could hardly be a better way for the student of theology to cut his teeth on the issues the Lutheran Church and broader Christendom have encountered in the past two centuries than by reading Sasse. Only days before his death, Robert Preus penned these words:

I believe that Hermann Sasse will be regarded, if this is not already the case, as one of the three most significant confessional Lutherans of our century, along with Francis Pieper and Werner Elert. I say *confessional* Lutherans, because he was no faddist but first and last throughout his productive life a confessional and confessing Lutheran. . . . My appreciation of the historic liturgy, the doctrine of the church, the ministry, and many articles of faith has been greatly enhanced by the many contributions of Sasse.<sup>3</sup>

The picture of Sasse in this collection of essays, while most often very favorable and appreciative, is also balanced. Ronald Feuerhahn's essay sketches the contours of Sasse's life, a treatment that cries out for that author to produce a full theological-biography of Sasse. On the North American scene only Lowell Green could have written the essay on Sasse's relations with his Erlangen colleagues. Green's connections with Reu's Wartburg Seminary and with Erlangen (especially Elert and Althaus) provide a rich context for a sympathetic but certainly critical treatment of Sasse. The essay helps clarify the underlying reasons for Sasse's high praise and occasional sarcastic criticism (at least in private correspondence) of Werner Elert. On more than one occasion Sasse called Elert, "The greatest confessor of the century . . . on paper." In Sasse's view, Elert had failed the Lutheran Confession at decisive moments, particularly in the church struggle, when Sasse pled with Elert to take the leadership of the confessionally Lutheran portion of the confession movement in the Hitler years, and then at the formation of Evangelical Church in Germany (EKiD). Yet, Green demonstrates that Elert rather courageously occupied the deanship of Erlangen's theological faculty year after year, and repeatedly shielded Sasse from the Nazis. Sasse's post-war stint as Pro-rector of Erlangen and the "de-Nazification" of that institution show Sasse to be a personally and confessionally beaten man.

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<sup>3</sup>Preface by Robert D. Preus written for an as yet unpublished collection of Sasse essays.

Naturally, his hope for the future of the Lutheran Church turned to America. The essay by John Wilch on Sasse and the Third Reich provides rich documentation on Sasse's collaboration with Bonhoeffer on the Bethel Confession, and on how that strongly Lutheran document met its unfortunate end as the effort to confess was co-opted by Barth and unionistic Lutherans. Thus Sasse's protest at Barmen.

John Kleinig, a student of Sasse, notes his teacher's major themes in the area of worship (the real presence as the heart of the liturgy; the proclamation of the gospel in the liturgy; liturgy as prayer). Kleinig argues that, while Sasse consistently argued for liturgical freedom, he had "no time for liturgical experimentation. He always taught us that we should use our freedom in a catholic way to retain the best of the past and affirm our continuity with the church of all ages." It is Sasse's great insight into the connection between liturgy, confession, and dogma that Kleinig believes will help us today develop a liturgical theology "as the decline of individualism in our post-modernist society gives way to a renewed interest in ritual and ceremony." Tom Hardt's contribution investigates Sasse's view of the use of philosophy in theology. In this intriguing essay Hardt gently takes his great teacher to task for his criticism of Pieper. According to Sasse, Pieper, following uncritically the lead of the seventeenth-century dogmatists, made too much of the natural knowledge of God. Hardt demonstrates, however, that Sasse, in his struggle against Barth's denial of natural theology and God-given natural orders, defended Pieper's very position. Kurt Marquart's essay presents an eyewitness's account of the dealings pre- and post-union in the Australian church and documents the events surrounding the coupling of the two Australian churches. He shows that Sasse definitely moved on his doctrine of Holy Scripture. Unfortunately, his great planned "opus magnum" on Scripture remained unfinished at his death. Marquart rightly notes that Sasse's attempt to find a *via media* between strict innerancy and a more accommodating position was similar to the attempt to find the *via media* between the *est* and *significat* in the Sacrament of the Altar. It cannot be done. The contribution of the editors, Stephenson and Winger are significant too, as are the other essays, but space and time do not allow comment. If the volume lacks anything it is in the area of Sasse's relationship with American Lutherans.

*Hermann Sasse: A Man For Our Times?* A confessional Lutheran cannot but say "YES!" For Sasse doctrine and life, dogma and liturgy

were inseparable. At a time also in hitherto confessional Lutheranism—especially in the bureaucratic enclaves of the church—when there is precious little serious reflection upon dogma and its relationship to pragma, Sasse could not be more timely.

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*The Christian Polemic Against the Jews in the Middle Ages.* By Gilbert Dahan. Translated by Jody Gladding. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998.

This is a book which does not live up to the promise of its title. There are hints that the writer's conclusion that "this literature [is] an appealing and lively body of work to read" (119) is probably an accurate one, but the analysis of the material was rather shallow.

Having said that, the book does provide a general introduction to the polemic of the period. Dahan reminds the reader of the three basic forms of polemic: *testimonia*, treatises, and dialogues. He then groups the writings of the period under those general topics. In bits and pieces, Dahan gives his readers some tantalizing quotations. However, he fails to pursue the actual theological strands of the argumentation.

In particular, he could have pursued the exegetical approach of Guillaume of Bourges, a converted Jew, in his *Book of the Wars of the Lord* written about 1235. His interpretation of the road to Emmaus (50) suggests a need to examine the work more closely. Why did he convert? According to Dahan the polemic stressed authority (the biblical text) and reason. A convert like Guillaume would have made an interesting case study.

This work invites those seeking a topic for a doctoral dissertation topic to plunge into some of these sources at a deeper level. Lutherans might want to ask the question: What do the writings of the Middle Ages teach us about our own attempts to speak to the Jews of today, not as ecumenists, but as those who desire to profess Christ as the center of the Scriptures?

Karl Fabrizious  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



## Books Received

Barton, John. *Holy Writings, Sacred Text: The Canon in Early Christianity*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997. xiii + 210 Pages. Paper.

Bauckham, Richard. *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998. x + 79 Pages. Paper. \$12.00.

Baum, Markus. *Against the Wind: Eberhard Arnold and the Bruderhof*. Farmington, Pennsylvania: Plough, 1998. ix + 301 Pages. Paper. \$14.00.

Bingham, D. Jeffrey. *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel in Adversus Haereses*, volume VII of *Traditio Exegetica Graeca*, edited by L. Van Rompay. Belgium: Lovanii In Aedibus Peeters, 1998. xv + 357 Pages. Cloth.

Blumhardt, Christoph. *Action in Waiting*. Farmington, Pennsylvania: Plough, 1998. xxxi + 222 Pages. Paper. \$15.00.

Bobrinsky, Boris. *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*. Crestwood, New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999. ix + 330 Pages. Paper.

Braaten, Carl E. and Jenson, Robert W., editors. *Marks of the Body of Christ*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999. xii + 167 Pages. Paper. \$18.00.

Bray, Gerald, editor. *1-2 Corinthians*, New Testament Volume VII of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, edited by Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999. xxiii + 348 Pages. Cloth.

Breck, John. *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics*. Crestwood, New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998. 288 Pages. Paper.

Bright, Pamela, editor and translator. *Augustine and the Bible*, *The Bible through the Ages*, volume 2. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999. 376 Pages. Paper. \$30.00.

Buchrucker, Armin-Ernst. *Frauenpfarramt und Feministische Theologie*. Gr. Oesingen, Germany: Verlag der Lutherischen Buchhandlung Heinrich Harms, 1995. 70 Pages. Paper.

Burtness, James H. *Consequences: Morality, Ethics, and the Future*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999. ix + 173 Pages. Paper. \$16.00.

Cooper, John W. *Our Father in Heaven: Christian Faith and Inclusive Language for God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. 301 Pages. Paper.

Davis, John J. *The Mummies of Egypt: The Story of Egyptian Mummies*. Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1986. 143 Pages. Paper.

Davis, Kenneth C. *Don't Know Much About the Bible: Everything You Need to Know about the Good Book but Never Learned*. New York: Avon Books, 1999. 533 Pages. Paper. \$12.50.

Dawn, Marva J. *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999. viii + 377 Pages. Paper. \$18.00.

De Groot, Marc., editor. *Oecumenii Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, Volume VIII of *Traditio Exegetica Graeca*. Belgium: Lovanii In Aedibus Peeters, 1999. xiv + 355 Pages. Cloth.