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## Book Reviews

*Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America.* By John H. Wigger. Religion in America Series, Harry S. Stout, General Editor. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. ix + 269 pages. \$55.00

The rise of the Methodist Church in the United States is nothing short of astounding, going from fewer than 1,000 adherents in 1770 to more than 250,000 in 1820. Along the way, Methodism helped change the face of American Christianity in both its doctrine (from Calvinism to Arminianism) and practice (from a liturgical service to revivalism). John Wigger's purpose is to document the story of Methodism's remarkable rise in the early national period, from the late eighteenth century when Methodists made up approximately 2 percent of the American religious population, to 1850, when they made up more than 34 percent and in so doing, to demonstrate how they contributed to a "fundamental reformulation of Christianity in America" (7).

Wigger divides the narrative into eight chapters: 1) The Emergence of American Methodism; 2) The Methodist Connection; 3) The Methodist Itinerant; 4) The Social Principle; 5) A Boiling Hot Religion; 6) Slavery and African-American Methodism; 7) Sisters and Mothers in Israel; 8) Methodism Transformed. Wigger argues that were it not for Methodism, Christianity may "have gone the way of the church in much of Europe." However, in America "religion came so firmly under the sway of the laity that popular beliefs and customs became the very frameworks around which new churches were built" (11). One might note that this was also the case in which older denominations transformed themselves, including the Lutheran Church. The impact of Methodism on S. S. Schmucker, for example, quickly comes to mind.

What was at the heart of Methodism's success? A host of factors, answers Wigger. "The replacement of state-sponsored churches with a religious free market, the pervasive impact of republican ideology, and the rising strength of America's geographic and cultural peripheries. . . . Methodism capitalized on these trends by identifying with middling people on the make . . . making use of an efficient system of itinerant and local preachers, class meetings, love feasts, quarterly meetings, and camp meetings; embracing popular religious enthusiasm; creating a variety of new roles for women; . . . and making Christianity accessible to African Americans." His conclusion? "Within this context the movement's style, tone, and agenda worked their way deep into the fabric of American life, influencing nearly all other mass religious movements that would follow as well as many facets of life not directly connected to the church" (5). The evidence for Wigger's sweeping claims remains apparent even today.

One of the more perplexing elements of Methodism and its relation to the emerging American mind is its hierarchical polity. Nathan Hatch, in his seminal work *The Democratization of American Christianity* (Yale, 1989), has shown that by appealing to Americans' sense of personal identity and self determination, pastors in the early national period were able to empower themselves by empowering the

people. How is it that Methodism and its episcopal polity could prove so effective in a democratizing atmosphere. Wigger hints at the solution to the problem. Episcopacy affected the clergy most primarily. The author tells the story of how bishops would keep their horses saddled and close at hand for a quick getaway when it came time to post assignments to circuits. On the other hand, while people on the circuits might be interested in the assignment of a preacher to their circuit, there was little they could do about it; and if the preacher was effective in his ministrations, then he would be readily accepted. In the end, pragmatism reined: "For the majority of Methodist leaders and followers alike, what counted most was the ability to reach the widest possible audience" (41).

*Taking Heaven by Storm* is a fine addition to the literature of American Christianity. Appropriate images are splashed here and there in the text, bringing faces together with names. The notes are extensive and will satisfy the student who wants to pursue topics for further study. Though the hardbound book is priced at \$55.00, the paperback, scheduled to be issued in September 2001, should make this fine work easily available to interested professors, students, and pastors.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

***The Encyclopedia of Christianity Volume 1 (A-D)*. Edited by Erwin Fahlbusch, Jan Milic Lachman, John Mbiti, Jaroslav Pelikan, and Lukas Vischer. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 1999. xxxviii + 893 pages. \$100.00.**

Based on the third edition of *Evangelische Kirchenlexicon* in 1986, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* will ultimately comprise five volumes. Once complete, it will provide a comprehensive overview of Christianity historically and theologically. If the remainder of the volumes hold up the high standard of the first (and there is every reason to expect they will, given the credentials of the editorial team), this set may well become a standard reference work for theologians and pastors in the church.

The volume provides rich summaries of the various Christian traditions of the world and demographic and statistical information on these traditions, as well as their representations in most of the countries of the world. For example, in this volume, there are entries on Argentina, Bangladesh, Congo, and Djibouti. Socioeconomic, philosophical, and extra-Christian entries also find their way into the work. Here entries include Amnesty International, the categorical imperative, democracy, and Depth-Psychological Exegesis.

The heart of the text is the fine theological and historical articles, with topics such as Alexandrian Theology (by Ulrich Wicker), Catechist (by Eckart Schwerin), and Deacon/Deaconess (by Elsie Anne McKee). Several topics receive more than one entry, a case in point being Saint Augustine. Eugene Teselle of Vanderbilt University supplies an excellent introduction to the life and thought of the North

African Bishop. Gerard O'Daly then offers a nuanced and succinct treatment of Augustine's theology. All entries feature concise and poignant bibliographies.

All in all, while *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* does lean toward a more liberal interpretation of Christianity in many of its articles, it remains an excellent resource for Confessional Lutheran theologians. Though the scope of the work is enormous, the work holds together well. The translations read very well and the scholarship is fresh. The one downside to the work is its cost. While \$100.00 for a volume of this type is not outrageous, it does perhaps place it outside of the means of many pastors to purchase it for their personal libraries. On the other hand, if church libraries could put together a plan for purchasing the volumes over a number of years, they would find themselves with one of the richest resources for questions regarding Christianity, its history and theology.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

*Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday.* Edited by Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996.

David Steinmetz is one of the leading Reformation scholars of our day and a central theme in his work has been the study of biblical exegesis in the Reformation period. Therefore, a collection of essays by friends and former students devoted to the same subject is an appropriate tribute to Professor Steinmetz on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday.

Seventeen essays are organized into four parts, "The Medieval and Renaissance Background," "Exegesis and Interpretation in the Early Reformation," "Continuity and Change in Mid-sixteenth-century Biblical Interpretation," and a "Conclusion." While they exhibit a variety of approaches and topics, they all demonstrate a high level of scholarship and readability.

Especially noteworthy are the articles by Kenneth Hagan ("Luther on Psalm 116"), Timothy Wengert ("Melanchthon on Romans"), and Robert Kolb ("Nicholas Selnecker on Psalms"). Hagan's essay locates Luther as an exegete in the tradition of his medieval forebears by examining that tradition with respect to just one verse, but an important one to Luther, Psalm 116:11, "Everyone is a liar." Returning to Jerome and Augustine, Hagan points out that the medieval tradition understood the Psalter theologically and, therefore, this verse as a statement about man before God apart from grace. Luther sharpened the contrast between man and God and emphasized that only in Christ does man's false self-understanding cease, but in no way did Luther depart from his tradition or anticipate "modern" exegesis.

If Hagan has shown that Luther's exegesis was medieval, Timothy Wengert demonstrates that Melanchthon's was humanist, "Melanchthon's method rendered the exegete and the exegetical tradition nearly invisible. . . . Melanchthon blended evangelical theology and humanist method and placed

both in the authoritative mouth of St. Paul himself" (118). Using Melanchthon's *Annotations on Romans* (1522), Wengert shows how Melanchthon broke new exegetical ground in the sixteenth century by analyzing the epistle as a "letter, shaped by its author, using common rhetorical methods to make a single theological point, the letter's *scopus*" (126). But such an analysis was hardly devoid of theological relevance. Melanchthon, using the techniques and terminology of humanist rhetorical criticism, argued persuasively that the point of Paul's entire letter was justification by faith. He did this not by quoting the apostle to prove Luther, but by letting Paul speak for himself.

Robert Kolb's article on Nicholas Selnecker examines the latter's Christology as it appeared in his exegesis of Psalms 8, 22, and 110. Besides helping to compose the Formula of Concord, Selnecker also wrote voluminously, including a massive homiletical treatment of the entire Psalter. Kolb's analysis is based on this work.

Besides Luther, Melanchthon, and Selnecker, the articles in *Biblical Interpretation* discuss numerous non-Lutheran exegetes of the period such as Erasmus, Zwingli, and Calvin. As the examples discussed above illustrate, these essays treat narrow topics from a broad perspective. They offer careful readings of particular texts but place them into the context of larger themes present in contemporary scholarship. Most readers will probably not read this book straight through, but those that do will get a fine sampling of how today's scholars are studying biblical interpretation in the Reformation period.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

*Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements*. Edited by Richard A. Landes. Routledge Encyclopedias of Religion and Society, Davide Levinson, series editor. New York and London: Routledge, 2000. xii + 478 pages. \$125

With the coming and going of the year 2000, myriads of books on millennialism made their appearance. Covering millennialism in religion from A to Z in one almost 500-page volume, the *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements* is an outstanding resource with a sweeping scope.

Landes's editorship is supplemented by a fine group of associates, including the likes of Michael Barkun, Eugene Gallagher, and Robert Whalen, among others. This fine team brings a wealth of scholarly research and writing experience to the task. Articles touch on millennialism in Christianity and in World Religions. Ranging from 666 to Ghost Dance and from Demagogues to Y2K, the articles show a consistently fine level of research and are captivatingly written. Many images supplement and enhance the text. Scattered throughout are primary source readings. For example, one may read The Delaware Prophet's Vision of 1762-63 (120) or a Letter Found in Jonestown. There is even the occasional appearance of millennial humor (371). Each major article features a bibliography.

Given the astonishing popularity of the Left Behind series—even among Lutherans!—and its less than subtle advocacy of dispensational premillennialism, this volume should prove to be an extremely helpful resource to pastors in the parish. Although the doomsayers of the year 2000 are busy revising their calculations, one thing of which we can be certain is that yet other attempts at discerning the time of Our Lord's return will be forthcoming. When they do, a book like this can provide significant aid in helping to the pastor in answering the questions of the people committed to his care. Its price of \$125.00 is rather steep for the average pastor, yet one may find it well worth the money, depending on the situation in which he serves.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

*God in Russia: The Challenge of Freedom.* Edited by Sharon Linzey and Ken Kaisch. University Press of America, Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 1999. 428 pages.

As articulated by editors Linzey and Kaisch, "The collection of articles contained in this book is designed to elucidate the peculiarities and issues involved in [the] meeting of the American West and post-Communist Russia in the arena of Christian purpose and mission. What are the existing prejudices, stumbling blocks, and perspectives, and what can we in the West hope to accomplish in the post-Communist East? What is hopeless to attempt? The collection is addressed to missionaries and those who support them with their prayers and dollars. It is addressed to historians, theologians and researchers. It is addressed to the ecumenically minded and to those who think the ecumenical movement is a hopeless enterprise" (19).

The sudden fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 opened the floodgates to foreign missionaries. Foreign and indigenous cults and sects joined the fray. In the brief span of twelve years, these mission efforts have caused resentment and negative reactions from both the Orthodox Church and the government. *God in Russia* is to be commended for its irenic tone and candor, as it attempts to understand and explain the convictions and passions, the laudable accomplishments and embarrassing blunders of both the western missionary enterprise and historic Russian Orthodox Church. A few quotations will suffice to demonstrate the insightful and thought-provoking nature of these essays. Deacon Andrey Kourayev strongly opposes western Protestants and their "'Bible' parties at the stadiums" in Russia. He posits that the Russian "people have a different understanding of repentance than those who think it can be done in ten minutes at the stadium. And while it may be possible to advertise the Gospel much like you do toothpaste in America, this method is impossible in Russia" (57-58). Writing from the Balkans, Dimitrije Popadic observes, "...when the Slavic people hear the word 'Protestant,' the ideas which come to mind are: loud, rich, Western, disrespectful of tradition and customs, and contentious" (246). Curiously, Papadic notes, "the optimum time for establishment of Orthodox/Protestant relations, spiritually, theologically, and ecclesiastically, might have been during the

Reformation" (248). Unfortunately, Orthodox Patriarch Jeremiah II (1572-1595) rejected the Augsburg Confession as obvious heresy and wrote, "And we beg you not to trouble us further...Go your way and write us not more about dogmas" (248-249).

Should Christian Churches from the West be engaged in mission work in the nations of the former Soviet Union? Is it in the interest of these nations to afford religious freedom to all religions, including the right to gather for public worship and the right to evangelize? *God in Russia* answers yes. The value of this book, however, is the conversation concerning the challenge of *how* mission work should, and should not be done. Here the issues are many and mystifying. Abbot Innocentiy Pavlov's essay addresses the inadequate translations of Holy Scripture in the Russian Language. He strongly advocates training Russian theologians and linguists in the most recent achievements of archeology, philology and exegesis in order that the unadulterated Word of God might be heard by the Russian people. From this Pavlov deduces: "The evangelism of Russia can be carried out best by Russians themselves. Just as Westerners generally are not able to translate from an 'insider's' understanding of the Russian mentality and culture without putting in years and years of study, so they also are not really qualified to reach Russians in a way that can be permanently satisfying. The best that can be done by Western Christians who have an earnest desire to help solve the problem of evangelism of Russia is to help Russia with good theological literature. First and foremost, Russians need help in the field of Biblical studies, to prepare well-educated scientists, theologians, and Biblicists to reach their own people. This may be difficult for Westerners to understand, but it is the view of most indigenous Russian Christian pastors, academicians, and missionaries, whether they have the courage to risk alienating their Western supporters and counterparts, or not" (245). Indeed, it is consistent with the missiological perspective of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. In the past five years, CTS has trained more than thirty men (from the nations of the former Soviet Union) for the pastoral ministry, plus several women who serve as translators and musicians.

The Orthodox Church, however, is unprepared to respond in a positive manner to the new religious freedom. Its clergy remain largely uneducated and its leadership compromised. This is not surprising since the communists did their best to obliterate the Orthodox Church by destroying buildings and killing priests and believers. According to Russian scholar Dr. Boris Gontarev, "Officially and formally the communist power seemed to wither and die in August 1991. But some of the former communist institutions survived and are blooming even as you read this." Gontarev is referring to the "bureaucratic structure and top hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church." He advises Americans, "It seems incredible, but it is a fact. Regardless of their respectful beards and swinging big crosses upon their fancy robes, they are what they are—the same Soviet privileged officials fully rewarded for their blind obedience to the Soviet State and nominated for the clerical positions they inherited from their communist bosses"



(216). Gontarev is equally forthright in his critique of "evangelical" missionaries from America. "We must find devoted Christians who are Russian nationals. Give them a fitting preparation for the job and let them evangelize." Unfortunately, most of the preparation is grossly inadequate. "They graduate from short-term *schools of evangelism*, oriented in evangelical Christian theory and practice. But their newly acquired ability to play country-style chords on the guitar and sing the very inept Russian translations of English hymns will do them little good in evangelizing Russians in Russia. Frankly, I don't see a great future for this type of evangelism in Russia" (154).

The overall caliber of the twenty-four contributors is quite impressive. They comprise both ordained and lay scholars, including a former United Nations Secretariat in New York (Gontarev) and a former dissident who became an elected member of the first Russian democratic Parliament (Fr. Gleb Yakunin). The book also includes a forward by Dr. Ben Armstrong (executive secretary of the National Religious Broadcasters, 1966-89) and a second foreword by the Rev. Canon Michael Bourdeaux (founder and first director of the respected Keston Institute, Oxford, England). Theologically the authors represent two groups—moderate Orthodox and "Evangelical Protestants," (for example, from historic Reformed and Anabaptist traditions). Lutherans eavesdropping on the conversation can learn much about the historical, religious, cultural, and contemporary context in which mission work in Russia is carried out. Lutherans tempted to adopt missiological models from American "evangelicals" can also learn much about the futility of imposing a shallow American Protestantism, which lacks both sacramental depth and a corresponding thick theology of the Holy Ministry, upon the Russian people.

Coincidentally, I read this book on the train ride between Moscow and Saratov. I took the opportunity to run a few of its themes by one of my traveling colleagues—a young Russian who converted to the Lutheran faith. He corroborated the views expressed in several chapters. He remarked, "Most Orthodox people know little about Jesus Christ. They know who Jesus is. They know he suffered and helps people. However, when you take it to a deeper level and discuss the doctrine of justification and that Jesus redeemed us from sin, they lose interest." There is a major disagreement between the Orthodox and evangelical Protestants over the definitions for *proselytism* and *evangelization*. The Orthodox "consider it proselytism for evangelical Protestants to proclaim the gospel to those whose only contact with the Orthodox Church may have been infant baptism, while evangelicals view any with an inactive faith as in need of 'evangelization'" (391). Historian Yakov Krotov explains, "One problem is that the Protestant missionaries from the West came to Russia with the explicit purpose of proselytizing. Now you may call it 'converting the lost,' but this is not how it comes across to officials of the Russian Orthodox Church....I believe the practice of proselytizing among believers of Russian Orthodoxy is wrong. You should know that the Patriarch's position is that all citizens of Russia belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, whether they are believers or not. This also seems

wrong to me. The problem is how to make a distinction between the truly Russian Orthodox and mere Russians" (69). Krotov advises, "I recommend quietude and passivity on our soil. This does not mean that you cannot actively go about your work. It does mean that you must work quietly without making a ruckus. Don't try to be best friends with the Patriarchate. They despise you for your naivete because you never will achieve it." A 1996 survey in the Russian newspaper *Segodnya* "confirmed the fact that the great majority of Russians are not actively Orthodox....51% consider themselves Orthodox...30% assert that they are unbelievers...only 6% to 7% attend church services once a week...67% very rarely go to church" (392). Gontarev notes, "I firmly believe that the evangelism of . . . post-communist Russia is a very special kind of activity, decidedly different from the evangelical practices extensively used by Western Christian organizations in other unevangelized areas of the world. Spreading the Gospel in Russia has very little in common with evangelism in the Amazon jungle, Laos, South Korea, or even in the inner cities of Detroit or Philadelphia....Americans should realize that they are not evangelizing 'from scratch.' Actually you are engaged in the process of *restoring* the Christianity that existed in Russia long before Columbus discovered your beautiful continent" (217-218).

Timothy C. J. Quill

***Medieval Exegesis. Vol. 1: The Four Senses of Scripture.* By Henri de Lubac. Translated by Mark Sebanc. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998.**

Along with Beryl Smalley's *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Henri de Lubac's *Medieval Exegesis* has long been recognized as a major contribution to the understanding of biblical interpretation in the Middle Ages. Unlike Smalley's work, however, de Lubac's appeared originally in French (1959-1963) and only now is appearing in English, thanks to Eerdmans publishers. Anyone who is interested in the history of biblical exegesis should be grateful.

As most readers of this journal probably recall, Martin Luther broke decisively with the medieval tradition by repudiating the fourfold interpretation of the biblical text in preference to one literal sense. But what is not always understood are the nature and origins of the tradition from which Luther departed. De Lubac's book provides that information.

So does Beryl Smalley's. However her work, first published in 1941, argues that the medieval approach to the Scriptures, that of treating the text as an allegory in which the literal meaning of the text represents other, more spiritual truths, has its roots in pre-Christian Alexandria, most notably in Philo. He interpreted the Old Testament the way pagans were accustomed to treating their primitive texts like the Iliad and the Odyssey, that is, not as literal, historical accounts but as symbols of universal (for example, neoplatonic) truths. From Philo, Clement of Alexandria and especially Origen and then subsequent exegetes like Jerome and Augustine as well as their medieval epigones learned to read the biblical text as symbolic of Christian truths. Although more respectful of the facticity of biblical

narratives than Philo, they nevertheless understood the facts as pointers to ultimate truths. The literal narratives, especially in the Old Testament, were valuable not in themselves but in leading the reader to the spiritual truths they represented. For Smalley, therefore, a major theme in her work is how medieval exegetes recovered the significance of the literal meaning in itself; and implicit in her argument is the conclusion that biblical interpretation had taken an illegitimate turn right at the beginning of the Christian era under the impulse of the Alexandrians.

De Lubac's work is an answer to Smalley's and constitutes a defense of medieval allegorization, the impulse for which, he argues, is christological not pagan and is to be found in Origen, not Philo. De Lubac writes, "However numerous may be the borrowings that Origen makes from Philo . . . , it is impossible to assimilate these two exegeses. Origen's third sense [the sense of Christ], serves not merely to 'modify' Philo's exegesis, or, to put it more broadly, Jewish exegesis in general. Jewish exegesis is really and truly surpassed, since what is at stake is now a new principle which owes nothing to it" (150). In other words, for Origen and those who followed him, the key to understanding the Old Testament is not a set of universal truths but the coming of Christ. All the Law and the prophets give witness to Him and must be interpreted accordingly.

According to De Lubac, medieval exegesis is a profoundly christological reading of the Scriptures, "[Jesus Christ] is the Master of the First Testament as he is of the Second. He has made them for each other. He separates them and reunites them in himself. Thus, if such a transition can be made from one to the other, it is because it is a 'transition to Christ' and concurrently a 'transition that is effected in Christ'" (236). In principle, therefore, no reading of the Scripture is permissible if Christ is not its content — the work of Christ, the church of Christ, the promises of Christ, etc.

This means also that "Christian exegesis is an exegesis in faith. . . . Taken in its entirety, not in its details, and in its substance, not in its embroideries, it is an act of faith in the great historical Act that has never had and never will have its equal: for the Incarnation is unique" (260). The literal meaning of the Scriptures is true — all that it recounts has happened in history — but the purpose of the Bible is not simply to recount history but transform the reader by bringing him into Christ. Therefore, being true to the ultimate goal of Scripture means interpreting it in such a way that it nurtures faith, life, and hope in Christ. In other words, for the medieval theologian biblical exegesis necessarily included the doctrine, morals, and eschatological expectations of the Christian church because they are the ultimate content of the Bible. Not to find them there would be an act of unbelief.

Thus, De Lubac is eloquent in relating the medieval *method* of exegesis to the christological convictions of its inventors. The argument, however, is not entirely convincing. For example, when Luther began to lecture on the Scriptures (Psalms, 1513-1515), he already knew that one could employ the method to advance a

worldly agenda not Christ (WA 3: 11,12); and a few years later, when he actually repudiated the method, he was convinced that scholastic exegetes had used it to obscure Christ rather than to reveal Him (*Operationes in Psalmos* WA 5: 643-647). For Luther, the literal meaning was the christological sense. His Christian convictions did not lead him to allegorize the text but to a renewed appreciation for what it actually said.

That being said, however, even if one does not embrace De Lubac's argument in its entirety, this book is a remarkable achievement. The author's familiarity with a vast array of medieval sources is extraordinary and his ability to expound these sources according to their fundamental theological presuppositions is very impressive. To be sure, this work is not for everyone; Smalley's book is a better introduction to the subject. But for those who are seriously interested in the topic and have the requisite background, Henri de Lubac's *Medieval Exegesis* is required reading.

Cameron A. MacKenzie

**Kathy Black, *Culturally-Conscious Worship*. Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2000. x + 153 pgs. \$19.99.**

Matters surrounding the planning and leadership of worship in multicultural congregations are this book's topic, though less attention is given to specifics and more to "cultural conflicts that arise in regard to the various expectations people bring to worship . . ." (Preface, x). Black cites her own book, *Worship Across Cultures* (Abingdon, 1998) as a resource for specific information. She wants to show how "assimilationist" congregations require members to subjugate particular cultural practices to a pre-existing pattern sponsored by the dominant culture. "Culturally-conscious" worship, in contrast, is intent on awareness and use of elements and styles from all cultures present.

An early chapter lists reasons people might join a multicultural church, or else a church of another culture, including desires to be integrated with a larger community, to assimilate to the dominant culture, to be loyal to denomination, to be geographically close to the building, to manifest concern for justice, or the desire to make a difference. One suspects these are reasons anyone might give for joining any church. Further, as in culturally homogeneous parishes, there are a variety of ways in which worship is planned in multicultural settings, ranging from the rubrics of a common liturgy to the pastor's preference or team of leaders. Again, the reader senses nothing remarkable about this, though congregations wishing to maximize diverse cultural resources are advised to use the team approach. A short section on various ways to deal with multiple languages in one church does offer some practical advice.

A chapter on "Kin-dom Visions and Kinship Values" attempts a theological apology for culturally-conscious worship. Besides the egalitarian motif, the "kin-dom vision" seeks unity-in-diversity, as opposed to the segregation of "kinship

values." Black reviews forms of inclusion and exclusion ranging from assimilation (subjugation of cultural particularities) through ethnocentrism, overlooking differences, internalization of perceived inferiority by minority cultures, to unity-in-diversity, the "kin-dom" ideal of Acts chapter 2.

Confusion about worship practices and expectations spring in part from cultural complexities, explored in another chapter. Worship leaders should be aware of and sensitive to expectations as to sermon length, musical style, announcements, creeds, methods of passing the peace, or greeting. Leaders do well to provide space for airing expectations and preferences, even though some cultural norms dictate silence around these matters out of deference to authority. In any case, as Black suggests, these preferences may have as much to do with denominational or theological tradition as ethnicity.

Culturally-conscious parishes should work to build a shared story, a unified culture made by balance and blend. For instance, a Korean presence might introduce the Tong Song Kido method of simultaneous prayer. Some used to kneeling and others who stand for communion might blend by varying the posture according to the liturgical season. A variety of musical styles and texts should be used. Black asks why some cannot sing the *Gloria Patri* with inclusive language while others use the traditional formula. Here, and in other spots in this book, sufficient distinction between theological and cultural matters is not made. The inclusive language preference is ideological, and, one presumes, does not represent a "culture" in the same sense that, say, Indonesia does. What sort of theology of prayer is suggested by the Korean prayer method? Where do the boundaries between cultural preferences and theological authority lie? The sensitivity this book encourages about diversity is not matched by consideration of the theological implications of blending various practices simply for the sake of a unity-in-diversity.

William P. McDonald  
Tennessee Wesleyan College  
Athens, Tennessee

***The Oracles of God: The Old Testament Canon.* By Andrew E. Steinmann. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999.**

Debates about canonicity are not merely of academic interest. They touch upon vital areas of theological concern, such as questions of inspiration and inerrancy; the role and authority of the church in the canon's formation; and historic differences between Christian communions regarding the extent of the canon. Because of this, a study such as Andrew Steinmann's is of tremendous service to the church. By a meticulous analysis of ancient texts that shed light on the canonical process, he provides the reader with a detailed, yet lucid, account of the history of the Old Testament canon.

Steinmann introduces the subject with a brief description of several modern theories that posit various answers as to how and when the Old Testament canon was closed. Finding faults and weaknesses in each of these, he proceeds to lay the groundwork for a new theory. The main body of the work is divided into three sections. In the first, he explores a host of nonbiblical Jewish texts from the second century B. C. to the early first century A. D., the content of which implicitly or explicitly sheds light on two questions: (1) what was the extent of the canon (for example, which books are and are not included) and (2) was the canon considered closed (in theory or in reality)? The second section concentrates on evidence from the first century A. D., including, of course, the New Testament texts. Here, as above, the same two primary questions are posed to each text. The third section is divided into a discussion of the canon's history in both the synagogue and the church from the second through the fourth century. In the final chapter, he summarizes his findings, and, upon that basis, clearly explicates his theory of canonical formation and closing.

Steinmann's findings substantiate the three basic points of his thesis. First, the Old Testament canon was formed before the second century B. C.. This early date is supported by a multiplicity of early Jewish and Christian texts that assume the existence of a distinct group of books. Second, before Jerusalem's destruction in A. D. 70, the canon was not a *list* of books, but a *collection* of books kept in the temple archives in Jerusalem. This understanding of the canon explains the absence of any list before the temple's destruction. Third, when the temple archives ceased to exist, the canon made the transition into a list of books that were considered normative.

The evidence that Steinmann cites and analyzes proves not only that the Old Testament canon was closed before the second century B. C.; it also demonstrates that the majority of early Christians agreed with the Jews regarding the extent of the canon. Although some Christians argued with the Jews regarding the canonicity of certain *additions* to biblical books (for example, the Greek additions to Esther), they did not propose that other books belonged in the canon besides those accepted by the Jews in and before the time of Christ. It was primarily in the Christian west, largely due to the influence of Saint Augustine, that books historically viewed by the Jews and early Christians as outside the Old Testament canon, came to be considered canonical.

Steinmann's book is well argued and well written. It deserves study by all those who are called to meditate and preach upon "the oracles of God."

Chad L. Bird  
Saint Paul's Lutheran Church  
Wellston, Oklahoma

*Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah.* By David Noel Freedman. *Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego.* Volume 6. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1999. 94 Pages. Cloth.

Of the eight acrostic poems of the Psalter, Psalm 119 (traditionally called "The Great Psalm") is the most easily recognizable example of this poetic genre. The psalm is divided into twenty-two stanzas (one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet) with eight lines to each stanza, each line beginning with the corresponding Hebrew letter of that stanza. Of the 176 lines, 167 of them include either the noun *tôrâ* or seven other terms within the semantic range of *tôrâ*. The repetition of these eight key words (with *tôrâ* chief among them) establishes the undeniable theme of the psalm as delight in the *tôrâ* of YHWH.

In *Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah*, David Noel Freedman explores these well-known data about "The Great Psalm" in four essays (two previously published). His primary goal is to demonstrate that, contrary to the opinion of some scholars, Psalm 119 is not "an artificial product of religious poetry" (Weiser), but a creative, complex work of art exhibiting both symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns.

In the first essay, Freedman examines the similarities and differences among the eight acrostic Old Testament psalms (9/10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145). Six of these are paired (Psalms 9/10 and 37; 25 and 34; 111 and 112) according to similarity in structure. When the total lines or cola of these six pairs are added to the cola of Psalm 145, the number matches that of the cola of Psalm 119. Thus, Freedman concludes, the symmetry of the eight acrostic psalms is a master work of unity and integrity.

The second and third essays are concerned with the arrangement and distribution of key words, syllable count, and accentual count of Psalm 119. Freedman's punctilious labor reveals that the total number of eight key *tôrâ* words (177), although not arranged in a wooden fashion, approximate the number of lines in the poem (176). The average syllable count (16 per line) affirms the veracity of a quote from Eusebius of Caesarea that Hebrew poetry consists of sixteen syllables per line. The accentual count, however, follows no consistent pattern.

In the final essay, Freedman draws upon his structural analysis to summarize the theology of Psalm 119. Of special interest is his affirmation that "Psalm 119 gives *tôrâ* virtually the status of a divine hypostasis, like wisdom [ . . . ] in Proverbs 8 [ . . . ] Each of them embodies an essential aspect of Yahweh that nevertheless can be addressed, invoked, and appealed to itself as the object of devotion," (89-90). Such an insight undergirds a Christian reading of Psalm 119 which understands Christ as the incarnate *tôrâ* – the Word made flesh.

For those looking for a theological exposition of the text, or a verse-by-verse commentary, this is not the book for you. It is, however, a helpful analysis of the structure of Psalm 119. As such it provides a needed foundation upon which to

build further. Although the analysis is highly technical at times, numerous summaries and charts help the reader follow the course of the argument. Such scholarly treatments as Freedman's ought to be used and applauded by the church as she continues to point to Christ as the Key of David – the content and the praying one of "The Great Psalm."

Chad L. Bird  
Saint Paul's Lutheran Church  
Wellston, Oklahoma