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Book Reviews

***Historical Atlas of Christianity.* By Franklin H. Littell. New York and London: Continuum, 2001. Hardcover. xv+440 pages. \$35.00.**

This revised version of the atlas, first published as *The Macmillan Atlas History of Christianity*, carries on both the strengths and weaknesses of its predecessor. On the one hand, the comprehensive scope of the work ensures that, whatever the topic, students and pastors turning to this reference will likely find an insightful text and engaging visual presentation. Author Franklin H. Littell focuses on decisive points in history when the Christian church has experienced critical changes. Sections treat "Early Christianity in Its Setting," "The Christian Roman Empire," and "The Age of Personal Decision." Littell stresses theology and dogma, ethical and moral life, and the expansion of Christianity to a world religion.

On the other hand, as strong as the maps are, they suffer on two points of presentation. First, they are all in black and white, making it more difficult to discern shades and boundaries. Second, all of the maps have a certain "fuzzy" or blurry character to them. They lack crispness and clarity, which makes them somewhat tiring to the eye to read.

Nevertheless, the book remains a solid piece of work, though one would quibble with some of the author's decisions and interpretations. His rehearsal of the tired argument that Luther was the source of passivity that allowed the rise of the Holocaust simply passes over such significant elements as the Magdeburg Confession and its theory of the right of "Lesser Magistrates" to resist the Emperor. (A partial corrective to this position has recently appeared. See David M. Whitsett, *Tyranny and Resistance: The Magdeburg Confession and the Lutheran Tradition* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001].) Given the brevity of the articles, it is a shame that Littell spends so much space on this argument. Still, this is a reasonably priced volume that can be helpful to pastors, students, and laypeople as well. Its presentation limitations aside, it might make a useful volume for a church library.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

***Exodus 1-18.* By William H. C. Propp. The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 1999. 680 Pages. Cloth.**

In penning this first half of a two-volume commentary on Exodus, William Propp fancies himself "the moderator of a vast, millennial colloquium" comprised of all (or, at least, most) of those whose words on this text are worthy of continued attention (54). That lack of modern snobbery is, in itself, refreshing, given the penchant of many commentators to turn a cold shoulder to their predecessors of "pre-critical" years. In Propp's work, everyone from Origen to Calvin to Rashi to Wellhausen all get a turn at the microphone.

Each section of Exodus is presented whole and then dissected and examined according to a set pattern: translation, textual notes, source analysis, redaction analysis, and commentary. Propp's translation is literal but lively. Hebrew metaphors cooked for modern consumption in standard English translations are served raw (for example, when Moses whined about being "heavy of tongue" Yahweh's "nose grew angry at [him]"). Infinitive absolutes and emphatic pronouns are repeated in the translation (God tells Moses He has "seen, seen" the humiliation of His people, 3:7). The textual notes, while unsurprisingly maze-like in their content, prove enlightening at times, especially in those sections where the superiority of the MT is questionable. Those who take delight in source and redaction criticism will find plenty here to satisfy their interest. Although Propp salutes the flag of the Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP), at least his allegiance does not hold sway over the whole work. The commentary section is not a standard verse-by-verse exposition. Rather, Propp singles out significant aspects of the text for further contemplation and (in some cases) speculation. Since Propp's "basic approach to the Bible is anthropological" (39) it comes as no surprise to find in the commentary section as great deal of cross-cultural comparisons, use of folktale analysis, and (re-)interpretation of texts, such as the Bridegroom of Blood (4:24-26) and the Passover from a sociological perspective. Though one may disagree vehemently with some of his conclusions, even those who rightly interpret these texts from the perspective of christological fulfillment will find much in Propp's commentary of use (for instance, his exposition of the eating of the Passover lamb).

If you already have a single standard Exodus commentary on your shelf, Propp's would serve as a helpful mate to it. If for no other reason, buy it so you may possess one of those rare commentaries saturated with poetic prose that is truly a delight to read.

Chad L. Bird

Jerusalem and Parousia: Jesus' Eschatological Discourse in Matthew's Gospel. By Jeffrey A. Gibbs. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Academic Press, 2000.

Jeffrey Gibbs, a student of Jack Kingsbury, applies Kingsbury's narrative method to the Eschatological Discourse (ED) in Matthew 24-25. He assumes the historical reliability of the speech and allows the wider context of the narrative to illumine the speech itself. Thus, Gibbs incorporates eschatological themes from other parts of Matthew, for example, the preaching of John the Baptist, the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. Gibbs holds that the ED predicts events after Jesus' ascension. The implied readers will understand Jesus' ED as fulfilled first in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and then in his Parousia (return) at the end of the age. The implied readers are not the disciples, but the first readers of the Gospel.

The first section of the ED (24:4-35) deals with events that will lead up to and accompany the destruction of Jerusalem. Signs accompanying these events

indicate to his enemies that Jesus is reigning as the Son of Man. The second part (24:36-25:46) sets forth the behavior required of the faithful who await Jesus' return, for which no warnings will be given. The implied readers are not to confuse the approaching destruction of the Temple with Jesus' Parousia (24:36) in response to Jesus' prediction of the Temple's destruction (24:2), as the disciples did (24:3). Since Jews reject Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, Jerusalem will be destroyed during the lifetime of the disciples, but the Parousia will be delayed.

The ED uses theophanic language that echoes Isaiah's prediction of Babylon's destruction (13:10) to describe the approaching destruction of Jerusalem (24:29). Implied readers would recognize this and apply it to the Temple's destruction. Gibbs holds that Christ's "coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:30) is the fall of Jerusalem in which His reign is seen. Gathering in of the elect (24:31) refers to commission of the disciples to go to the ends of the earth after the destruction.

Gibbs devotes two chapters to the end time character of Jesus' death and resurrection, which is the Gospel's goal and climax. In His suffering and death, Jesus is revealed as the "true eschatological King of Israel and the one who, by his suffering and death, fulfills his mission of saving his people from their sins (1:21; 20:28; 26:29)." In His death, Jesus begins to reign (20:21) and comes with royal power (16:28). Gibbs sees a threefold fulfillment of Jesus' words to the high priest (26:64): the rending of the veil (27:51) and other signs at Jesus' death, the testimony of the guards at Jesus' tomb to the religious leaders (28:11-15), and the fall of Jerusalem. All signify that "this man is seated at God's right hand and has been invested with power by the Ancient of Days, as Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13-14 declare." By the rending of the veil (27:51), God vindicates Jesus and verifies His predictions concerning the temple.

The cosmic distress that accompanies Jesus' death and resurrection is related to other predictions of Jesus recorded in the Gospel, but not to those in the ED. Gibbs relates the darkness over the land before Jesus' death (27:45) to the eschatological outer darkness described elsewhere in the teaching of Jesus, but not to the darkening of the sun in 24:29. The opening of tombs, resurrection of saints, their appearance in the "holy city," the earthquake, and the splitting of the rocks all underscore the end time significance of Jesus' crucifixion. Because the implied reader has learned from the rest of Matthew to think eschatologically about Jesus' life and ministry, he or she is led to understand Jesus' death and resurrection in the same way.

Much of current eschatological discussion, especially among millennialists, associates the increase of wickedness and tribulation in the world with the return of Jesus and the consummation of the age. Gibbs holds that for Matthew, God was already bringing His eschatological reign into history through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Those who respond in faith to Jesus' eschatological message "already possess the reign of heaven" and will "enter into the consummated reign of heaven on the last day." Those who oppose and reject Jesus now will receive

God's end time judgment at the Parousia, prefigured in the destruction of Jerusalem. Destruction is God's judgment against "this generation" for its rejection of His Son, but the time will come when Jesus will return and judge all according to their works (16:27). Pastors who read this volume can renew their appreciation for the eschatological dimensions of the ministry.

Paul Beisel
Concordia Theological Seminary

***Every Day Will I Bless Thee: Meditations for the Daily Office.* By Burnell F. Eckardt Jr. Sussex, Wisconsin: Concordia Catechetical Academy, 1998. xiv + 514 pages.**

As any pastor knows, finding suitable and usable material for the daily office and family prayers is more than a little challenging. The vast bulk of that which passes itself off as "devotional material" is little more than worthless tripe. "Devotional" has come to cover a category of generically religious activity and commentary, which is of a generic religious character. Hence we look in the local Christian book store and find under devotional programmatic suggestions ("pound nail into a piece of wood, because that's what your sins did to Jesus on the cross") or "how-to" suggestions ("what would Jesus do?"), or challenges to a better life ("my utmost for his highest"). In the vast majority of cases, this devotional material suffers from a fatal flaw – it is radically anthropocentric. It emphasizes *me* and *my experience* at the expense of Christ and what he has done for me.

And so, Lutheran pastors have oftentimes been sent on an unsolicited quest for devotions for their personal and family use, and that they might recommend to their parishes. The old and excellent *Daily Office Book* by Lindemann has been replaced by Sauer's *Daily Prayer*, a helpful but differently directed entity. Saints book from ALPB – too cost prohibitive. Finally, the Anglican communion's *Daily Office Book*, while very helpful for its readings, lacks any meditative character (some for which we may want to be thankful, given the state of Episcopal theology!).

Hence the welcome with which we greet this volume. Here is an eminently useful work whose application is for church and home, corporate and personal. But above all its strengths, which are numerous, is its theological character – it is summarily christocentric. Eckardt divides the book into three main sections. Following some introductory material, which includes a calendar for the church year, an Order for Family Prayer, and some general notes, Eckardt supplies the reader with meditations for the daily office, saints' days and festivals, and collects and prayers. Each mediation opens with a text from Scripture (the gospel lessons follow the historic gospels for the church year in the Western church), followed by a brief devotional commentary. Again, the meditations are unequivocally christocentric, as truly catholic devotions should and must be.

If there is one cumbersome element of the book, it is the separation of the appointed collects from their readings. One will have to do some page flipping to move from the Order for Family Prayer, to the meditation for the day, to the collect for the week. But this is common to daily office books—unavoidable, in fact—and does not at all compromise the usability of the work. One quickly adapts to the rhythm of moving through the volume.

The ultimate strength of the book is its tie to the divine service. This volume is christocentric in the extreme, which is *very* good thing. It focuses consistently on what God has done and is doing for us in His Son through church and sacrament. For that we must thank again Pastor Eckardt and the Concordia Catechetical Academy for supplying us with such an excellent, insightful, and usable book for serious Lutheran devotional use.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence. By James L. Crenshaw. New York: Doubleday, 1998. 305 pages. \$34.95

This volume in the Anchor Bible Reference Library addresses one aspect of the broader topic of Wisdom literature in the Old Testament. The “deadening silence” referenced in the subtitle alludes to the need for communication to take place from one generation to another. The authors’s overarching quest in examining Israelite communication or education is epistemological: “the manner in which learning took place, and the horizon of knowledge,” (viii). To accomplish his objective, Crenshaw examines Jewish Wisdom texts (from the Old Testament and non-canonical writings) as well as related texts from Mesopotamia, Egypt, and other ancient cultures. He discusses literacy and schools in ancient Israel, the means by which knowledge was passed down and acquired, the relationship between teachers and pupils, and the “debates” within various Wisdom traditions over the extent to which wisdom was acquired by human endeavor or given by divine favor (or both).

To its credit, the book does not assume too much. Readers unfamiliar with Wisdom literature from non-Israelite cultures are guided patiently through the texts. Although cross-cultural comparisons between Israel and others nations are found throughout the work, Crenshaw happily avoids any parallelomania that would reduce Israel to an Egyptian or Babylonian look-alike. Nor does the author attempt to accomplish more than he sets out to achieve. This is not an introduction to Wisdom literature. He is also to be commended for confessing that much of his work—excellent though it may be—is unavoidable speculation due to the lack of extant textual or archaeological material that would further illuminate how ancient Israel educated its own.

Speaking of speculation, receiving dishonorable mention in a chapter on the relationship between students and teachers is the LCMS. In a section entitled “Resistance to Learning,” our author pauses momentarily from his erudite

reflections to verbally spank communions such as those "Missouri Synod Lutherans" who have allowed conservatives to "capture control of seminaries" and to "undermin[e] theological education" (143). Dr. Crenshaw will no doubt be gladdened to know that he is gravely mistaken. Despite his fears of conservative reductionism and educational squelching, the "deadening silence" is still being filled in our seminary education with the wisdom of which he so eloquently writes in the rest of his work.

Chad L. Bird

Books Received

Barbour, Ian G. *Nature, Human Nature, and God*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 2002. 170 Pages. Paper. \$15.00.

Barnes, Michel R. *The Power of God*. Baltimore, Maryland: Catholic University of America Press, 2001. 333 Pages. Cloth.

Bauckham, Richard. *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2001. 289 Pages. Paper. \$20.00.

Bauckham, Richard. *Gospel Women*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. 343 Pages. Paper. \$22.00.

Baue, Frederic W. *The Spiritual Society: What Lurks Beyond Postmodernism?* Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001. 192 Pages. Paper. \$12.99.

Beeke, Joel R., editor. *Forerunner of the Great Awakening: Sermons by Theodorus Frelinghuysen*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000. 382 Pages. Paper. \$19.99.

Boice, James M., and Philip Ryken. *The Doctrines of Grace*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002. 240 Pages. Cloth.

Braaten, Carl E., and Robert W. Jenson. *The Last Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. 169 Pages. Paper. \$16.00.

Braun, John. *Isaiah 40-66*. People's Bible. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001. Paper. \$16.99.

Braun, William H., and Victor H. Prange, compiling editors. *Not Unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001. Paper. \$14.99.

Buckley, James J., and David Yeago, editors. *Knowing the Triune God*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001. 283 Pages. Paper. \$29.00.

Daly, Robert J., translator and annotator. *Origen*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992. 121 Pages. Cloth. \$16.95.

Foust, Thomas F., George R. Hunsberger, J. Andrew Kirk, and Werner Ustorf, editors. *A Scandalous Prophet: The Way of Mission after Newbigin*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001. xxiv + 325 Pages. Paper. \$30.00.

Friesen, Steven J. *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. 283 Pages. Cloth. \$49.95.

Hageneder, Fred. *The Spirit of Trees*. New York: Continuum, 2000. 256 Pages. Cloth. \$29.95.

Hampson, Daphne. *Christian Contradictions: The Structures of Lutheran and Catholic Thought*. Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 323 Pages. Cloth. \$59.95.

Hengel, Martin. *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2000. 354 Pages. Paper. \$24.99.

Humphreys, W. Lee. *The Character of God*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 281 Pages.

Issler, Klaus. *Wasting Time With God*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001. 282 Pages. Paper.

Kim, Seyoon. *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001. xv + 336 Pages. Paper. \$25.00.

Kolb, Robert, and James A. Nestingen, editors. *Sources and Contexts of The Book of Concord*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 2001. 277 Pages. Paper. \$25.00.

- Kremer, Kenneth. *For One Another: Touching Hearts in a Changing World*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001. Paper. \$12.99.
- Lazareth, William H. *Christians in Society*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 2000. 274 Pages. Paper. \$22.00.
- Longman, Tremper, III. *The Song of Songs*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001. 222 Pages. Cloth. \$35.00.
- Maggi, Armando. *Satan's Rhetoric*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 256 Pages. Cloth. \$37.50.
- Marcovich, M., editor. *Athenagorae*. Supplement to *Vigiliae Christianae*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2000. 76 Pages. Cloth.
- Matheson, Peter. *The Imaginative World of the Reformation*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress, 2000. 149 Pages. Paper.
- McKim, Donald K. *Reformed Theology*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. 241 Pages. Paper. \$29.95.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *The Bible in Translation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishers, 2001. 190 Pages. Paper. \$14.99.
- Meyer, Robert T., translator and annotator. *St. Athanasius*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2002. 154 Pages. Cloth. \$24.95.
- Montgomery, W., J. R. Coates, Susan Cupitt, and John Bowden, translators. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress. Translation copyright SCM Press 2000. 562 Pages. Paper. \$33.00.
- Murray, Scott R. *Law, Life, and the Living God*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002. 150 Pages. Paper. \$32.99.
- Packer, J. I. *Faithfulness and Holiness*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002. 256 Pages. Cloth. \$17.99.
- Phillips, Richard D. *Turning Back the Darkness*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002. 240 Pages. Paper. \$15.99.
- Quasten, Johannes, and Joseph C. Plumpe, editors. *The Didache*. Newly translated by James A. Kleist. Washington, District of Columbia: Catholic University of America, 2001. 235 Pages. Cloth. \$13.95.
- Ratke, David C. *Confession and Mission, Word and Sacrament*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001. 240 Pages. Paper. \$26.99.
- Raum, Elizabeth. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Called by God*. New York: Continuum, 2002. 184 Pages. Cloth. \$21.95.
- Ross, Allen P. *Introducing Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2001. 565 Pages. Cloth. \$39.99.
- Rudbeckius, Johannes. *Loci theologici: Föreläsningar vid Uppsala universitet 1611-1613*. Text in Latin. Mit einer deutschen Einleitung: Wittenberg-Orthodoxie in Uppsala am Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts. Lund, Sweden: Bengt Hägglund och Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, 2001. Cloth.
- Schmeling, Gaylin R. *God's Gift to You: A Devotional Book on the Lord's Supper*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001. 133 Pages. Paper. \$11.99.
- Sider, Robert D., editor. *Christian and Pagan in the Roman Empire: The Witness of Tertullian*. Washington, District of Columbia: Catholic University of America Press, 2001. 177 Pages. Cloth. \$37.95. Paper. \$17.95.

Steimer, Bruno, and Michael G. Parker, editors. *Dictionary of Popes and the Papacy*. Translated by Brian McNeil and Peter Heinigg. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001. 278 Pages. Cloth. \$50.00.

Stephan, Bradley Dean. *Meditation for Christians*. Kearney, Nebraska: Morris Publishing, 1997. 181 Pages. Paper.

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Topel, L. John. *Children of a Compassionate God*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Order of Saint Benedict, 2001. 314 Pages. Paper. \$29.95.

VanderBroek, Lyle D. *Breaking Barriers*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002. 175 Pages. Paper. \$15.99.

Wentz, Frederick K., editor. *Witness at the Crossroads: Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary Servants in the Public Life*. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, 2001. 256 Pages. Paper.