

Book Reviews

Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History. By Dale C. Allison. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. 588 Pages. Hardcover. \$54.99.

Some New Testament books buoy the spirit, while others rile us up, alerting us to man the ramparts. Allison does neither. *Constructing Jesus* is his fourth, and Allison claims final, book in search of the historical Jesus. Yet, Allison's particular quest is marked less by adventure than ambivalence, leaving the picture of a scholar caught in the doldrums. He frankly observes shortcomings of skeptics like Crossan, yet cannot bring himself to defend the historicity of the Gospels in the way of Bauckham. As such, his work evokes the story of Paul and Agrippa, with Allison playing both parts. Like Paul, Allison is so evidently a man of great learning. Yet, like Agrippa, he is almost, but not quite, persuaded. What Allison leaves behind is the legacy of an honest man who sees others make the leap of faith, but who himself remains immobilized and "haunted by what we now know about the frequent failings of human memory" (22).

What does Allison fear are the failings of human memory? Why have not the Evangelists recorded reliable history? Perhaps betraying his age, Allison notes: "To recollect is not to play back a tape" (2). He goes on to note that later events influence the way we think and that we tend to project our present circumstances into the past. Memories become less distinct with time, and even become displaced, so that we lose track of temporal sequence. Again, memories are collected and then used to serve a collective agenda. Yet, while many of us would proceed with caution, considering these caveats as speed bumps, Allison sees insurmountable hurdles. Memories fail and can be altered, Allison concludes, and that fact "cannot have found its exception among the early Christians" (30). What is strange, though, is how Allison has seemingly brought a very vague notion of memory into the conversation. Allison's thoughts all verge towards the personal and the psychological aspects of memory. He spends no real time taking into account other possibilities. That is to say, Allison neither goes into any kind of real reflection on the power of memorization in an oral society, nor does he take into account that apostles, playing the role of disciples, would have served not only as auditors but also as scribes. Witnesses to Jesus' actions were taking notes, and those notes were not simply mental. Rather than deal with a community that prized precision, Allison imagines early Christians caught in a type of fog. Here again the cliché rings true that a scholar creates a Christ in his own image.

This is not to say that Allison is not worth reading. His chapter on Jesus as "More than a Sage: The Eschatology of Jesus" is fascinating, and debunks any notion of Jesus as being simply adept at the aphorism. He was a teacher who preached of the coming kingdom in powerful sermons. Even better is his next

chapter, "More than a Prophet: The Christology of Jesus." Deconstructing the fantasies of Crossan and Richard Horsley, Allison lays out the evidence that Jesus had some type of Messianic self-understanding. Belief that Jesus came as Messiah and King is due to the fact that Jesus himself encouraged such belief. Now, for most of us, this is a given, but in the scholarly world, such pronouncements are rare and therefore welcome. As Allison elegantly ends this chapter, "We should hold a funeral for the view that Jesus entertained no exalted thoughts about himself" (304).

As for the historicity of the New Testament, Allison offers this insight: as much as modern-day scholars wish to turn the New Testament miracle stories into parables and symbolism, the Evangelists and their audiences believed these stories to be true. Allison writes, "Our Synoptic writers thought they were reconfiguring memories of Jesus, not inventing theological tales" (459). Likewise, Allison agrees that simply because a story is told for theological reasons does not mean that the story is therefore not historically factual. For Christians interested in the story of Jesus as history, these are excellent points, and we should be grateful that Allison has made them.

In the end, though, Allison remains in history's half-way house, neither a skeptic nor a believer. Helpfully, he doubts the doubters, but he cannot go all the way. Thus, he ends his work with this melancholy note: "If my deathbed finds me alert and not overly racked with pain, I will then be preoccupied with how I have witnessed and embodied faith, hope, and charity. I will not be fretting over the historicity of this or that part of the Bible" (462). One would hope instead that on his deathbed, Allison thinks not of his own life, but that of Christ, as told by the Evangelists. Maybe his next book will do the trick.

Peter J. Scaer

***A History of Lutheranism. Second Edition.* By Eric W. Gritsch. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010. 352 pages. Paperback. \$35.00.**

Eric Gritsch, Emeritus Professor of Church History of the Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, first published *A History of Lutheranism* in 2002. This updated edition generally follows the form of the first, though some important changes have been made.

Periodization is one of the historian's great challenges. When did a movement start? Are there specifically identifiable moments in a movement's history when it shifts from movement to institution, when its position solidifies or changes in important ways? These kinds of questions sometimes seem to have obvious answers—who can argue with October 31, 1517, as the beginning of the Lutheran movement? (Of course, some do!) Still, periodizing movements can at times defy simple articulation.

Gritsch's second edition shows that he has been thinking about and working at these questions in basic ways. For example, the first edition's first chapter was entitled "The Birth of a Movement" and dated 1517–1521. A good argument can be made for this arrangement. Now, however, Gritsch has re-titled chapter one as "A Reform Movement" and extended it to 1522. Chapter two was entitled "Growth and Consolidation" (1521–1555); now it is "Institutionalization" (1523–1555). Within the chapters the sections on "The Melanchthon Factor" and "The Territorial Imperative" both appear earlier in the narrative and make much more sense in their new positions. Other portions of the text remain largely intact, the chapters on Pietism and Orthodoxy being examples. Small changes, perhaps; yet making the interpretive historical claim that nuanced readings of the development of movements may lead interpreters to different conclusions—even in contrast to their own earlier-held convictions!

Historical interpretation is one thing; theological interpretation is another—the big question being where does one end and the other begin? Gritsch, longtime professor at Gettysburg, is consistent with his ecclesiastical tradition (ELCA). This, of course, means that at times he sees certain movements and events from a different perspective than this reviewer would. His interaction with Lutheran Orthodoxy and the ecumenical movement are modest examples. His reading of "The Missouri Way" is more problematic. Overstatements such as the claim that the founders of the Missouri Synod "wanted to preserve Lutheranism from Americanization" (197) are difficult to sustain when one recalls that ELCA predecessor bodies like the Iowa and Buffalo Synods were utterly convinced that Missouri was overly Americanized (which, incidentally, is noted on 198). The question, of course, is what one means by "Americanization," and whether that is the most useful way of organizing the story of Lutheranism in the United States. Further, while it is a small error within the scope of a book this large, I am compelled to point out an error repeated from the first edition; namely, Gritsch claims that Concordia Theological Seminary was established in Springfield, Illinois. It was not. Although CTS enjoyed a century of fruitful labor in Springfield (1875–1976), formally speaking the seminary was established in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1846 (it also resided in Saint Louis from 1861 to 1875).

Nonetheless, *A History of Lutheranism* is a useful and useable introduction to the Lutheran tradition overall. Indeed, one of its most helpful aspects is the global thrust of the chapter "New Challenges" (1917–). Gritsch's prose is straightforward and clear. While pastors might find much of it too basic if they have been through a full course of historical studies at seminary, this text would be within the easy reach of college students (a clear target audience) and informed lay people.

Christian Ethics According to Schleiermacher: Collected Essays and Reviews. By Hermann Peiter. Edited by Terrence N. Tice. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010. 772 pages. Paperback. \$80.00.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the Reformed theologian whose career charts the path for modern and, at least to some degree, postmodern theology, continues to evoke a great deal of sympathetic scholarly engagement on both sides of the Atlantic. The last decade has witnessed several significant studies of his ethics, including works by John Park, Frederick Beiser, Eilert Herms, and Brent Sockness, to name a few. The present volume is more akin to a sourcebook of essays and reviews spanning the career of an East German pastor/scholar, Hermann Peiter, whose careful textual work is combined with the conviction that Schleiermacher continues to be of abiding value for pastoral ministry and Christian witness and life today.

Peiter's German essays are included along with English translations and summaries by Terrence Tice, who has distinguished himself as a leading North American translator and interpreter of Schleiermacher. The entries in *Christian Ethics According to Schleiermacher* are arranged under three general headings: (1) the descriptive character of Schleiermacher's Christian ethics; (2) the Protestant heritage; and (3) review articles of secondary literature. The title of the volume is somewhat deceptive, as the essays cover a range of topics beyond the realm of ethics. For example, there are chapters on Schleiermacher's view of adult Christian education, examinations of various editions of Schleiermacher's works, his understanding of faith, and his lectures on "theological encyclopedia."

Christian Ethics According to Schleiermacher is not organized in such a way as to offer an accessible introduction and orientation to Schleiermacher's ethical thinking. Several of the essays in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, edited by Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge, 2005), or John Park's *Theological Ethics of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Mellen, 2001), are better suited to that task. Nevertheless, *Christian Ethics According to Schleiermacher* provides numerous interesting essays, taking up Schleiermacher's engagement with recurring issues in Luther studies and Lutheran theology such as law and gospel in Luther and Schleiermacher, Schleiermacher on antinomianism, and Schleiermacher's use of Luther's understanding of Christ as *sacramentum et exemplum*. Also included is a treatment of the essential place of the "priesthood of all believers" in Schleiermacher's theology and his understanding of the participatory nature of the Christian in the life of the church held together by covenants of love between the members so as to make effective the presence of Christ in the world. Schleiermacher's political theory is examined in its early-nineteenth-century context.

While Peiter succeeds neither in rehabilitating Schleiermacher as a theologian of the Reformation nor in convincing this reviewer of

Schleiermacher's apologetic relevance for contemporary church life, Peiter's work does provide much insight into the relationship of philosophy to theology in Schleiermacher's construal of ethics as the presentation of life grounded in the consciousness of the divine.

John T. Pless

***World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age.* By C. Kavin Rowe. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 300 Pages. Hardcover, \$65.00. Paperback, \$24.95.**

For the past three centuries, many interpreters have read the Book of Acts with the understanding that one of its central purposes is the presentation of the harmonious existence between the Roman Empire and those who came to be known as Christians. This position has become an axiom in Luke-Acts scholarship primarily due to the work of Heumann, Cadbury, Haenchen, Conzelmann, Tjara, Sterling, Heusler, and Meiser. Dissenting voices have been few and faint. C. Kavin Rowe, an Assistant Professor at Duke University Divinity School, seeks to turn this harmonious world of scholarship upside down by proposing that Acts is neither presenting Christianity as harmless to Rome nor advocating political liberation, but "aims at nothing less than the construction of an alternative total way of life—a comprehensive pattern of being—one that runs counter to the life-patterns of the Graeco-Roman world" (4). In short, Rowe argues that Acts presents Christianity as a culture-transforming movement rather than as one that is a comfortable bedfellow with the pagan culture, or pattern of living, in the Roman Empire.

The introductory chapter outlines Rowe's interdisciplinary approach: a close reading of the text that features "significant interaction with scholarship on the New Testament and on Graeco-Roman antiquity as well as interaction with contemporary work in political theory, narrative criticism, and constructive theology" (7). His work in interpreting Acts in the context of contemporary Graeco-Roman literature is a real strength of this volume. Unfortunately, much of the interaction with scholarship is buried in the almost one hundred pages of endnotes that one must flip to find. Rowe also issues an introductory warning—spoken to himself as well as others—concerning the ever-present danger of saying more about the interpreters of a text than the text itself. His animated writing style is engaging and his exegesis is thorough, fresh, bold, and says more about the text itself than its interpreters.

Rowe tackles his thesis in three primary chapters. Chapter two focuses on the testimony from Acts concerning what occurred as the exclusive claims of the God confessed by the apostles were proclaimed in the context of pagan religion. Rowe argues that the result was a "collision" between two very different ways of life rather than a harmonious coexistence. He documents this

"collision" by examining four representative accounts of Christian mission from Acts: Lystra (14:8-19); Philippi (16:16-24); Athens (17:16-34); and Ephesus (19:18-40). Rowe demonstrates from each of these examples how the Christian mission process of revelation (or "apocalypse") through the proclamation of the gospel and the resulting formation of a new community inherently destabilizes the beliefs and practices of Graeco-Roman culture and religion. For example, regarding Paul's speech in Athens, Rowe writes: "To agree with the logic of the Areopagus speech in the end, therefore, is not to see the truth of the gospel in pagan philosophical terms (translation) but to abandon the old interpretive framework for the new. It is, plainly said, to become Christian" (41).

Chapter three addresses the possible charge that a movement which destabilizes and transforms a culture could be construed as treason or sedition. To counter such a charge, Rowe argues that Luke intentionally narrates events when these charges were brought against Paul, as the representative of Christians, and how Roman jurisprudence consistently found him to be δίκαιος (i.e., "righteous" in the sense of "innocent"). Here he focuses on the accounts of Paul being brought before Roman officials: Gallio (18:12-17); Claudius Lysias (22:24-23:30); Felix (24:1-27); and Festus (25:1-27). Through examining each of these defenses, Rowe demonstrates that Christians neither were out for political liberation nor did they stand in direct opposition to the Roman government. Although there was a collision of cultures, this was no attempted coup of Roman rule. Instead, the Christian mission brought light, forgiveness of sins, and the way of peace.

Chapter four focuses on Luke's reconstructive counterpart to the deconstruction caused by a collision of cultures. Rowe focuses on "three mutually interdependent ecclesial practices that ground and thus generate Luke's overall vision as it is depicted in Acts: the confession of Jesus as Lord of all, the universal mission of light, and the formation of Christian communities as the tangible presence of a people set apart" (92). He notes that the results of conversion that Luke narrates are not merely an ideational shift in religious thinking, but "a lived way of knowing, a kind of 'thick' knowledge indissolubly tied to a set of practices that are instantiations of a world turned right side up" (6). Luke shows how conversion led not only to changes in thinking (i.e., doctrine) but also practices of daily life, especially the formation of and participation in Christian communities (i.e., churches). To put it another way: "Acts narrates the life of the Christian mission as the embodied pattern of Jesus' own life [Its] ecclesiology is public Christology" (173). One will appreciate the discussions of κύριος and εὐαγγέλιον in light of the Graeco-Roman context. More attention, however, could have been paid to the role Luke gives to Baptism in relation to the three core practices that Rowe highlights.

The final chapter, entitled "The Apocalypse of Acts and the Life of Truth," is the most unexpected, especially in a book published by Oxford University Press. Rowe chooses not to read Acts at arm's length with supposed scholarly objectivity that refuses to let the text make its claim on the life of the reader. Instead, he argues that to reject this comprehensive vision of Acts is to offer a counter-reading of what Luke has given us. It will be interesting to see the reactions within the NT guild to the contemporary relevance of Acts that he sets forth!

Kavin Rowe is a newcomer to Luke-Acts scholarship. His revised dissertation and first book, *Early Narrative Christology*, has rightly received widespread acclaim; see, for example, the review in *CTQ* 74 (2010): 188-190. Although *World Upside Down* is only his second book, it is a contribution that solidifies him as a voice in Luke-Acts scholarship to which we should turn our ears. You will hear of a bold witness to the crucified and risen Christ that turned a significant portion of the ancient world right side up by transforming lives, and still has the power to turn our contemporary pagan world right side up, too.

Charles A. Gieschen

C. Kavin Rowe is the keynote speaker at the Symposium on Exegetical Theology in Fort Wayne on January 18, 2011. The Editors

***Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God.* By Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. 527 pages. Paperback. \$30.00.**

As the world becomes increasingly urban, workers in the church desire resources to assist them in proclaiming Christ in urban contexts. *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God* by Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, recently reprinted in paperback, is one such resource that is useful for navigating and wrestling with the complexities of the city.

Structured sequentially as a holistic masterpiece but readily accessible by individual and potentially self-standing chapters, this textbook has six parts. Part One presents an historical view of cities past and present. Part Two offers a biblical-historical perspective on cities and God's concern for them. Part Three expounds an understanding of cities sociologically. Part Four is about developing urban church-growth eyes with the social sciences (ethnography and demography). Part Five is a discussion of promoting kingdom signs in the city for reaching people (especially the poor) and working for social transformation in the midst of spiritual warfare. Part Six deals with leadership development for the urban church, including curriculum development for mentoring and training clergy and laypeople.

Geared for work in the United States of America, Conn and Ortiz casually yet cleverly employ a global perspective by documenting developments in cities around the world. By providing an extensive theological treatment of God's ongoing relationship with people in cities, Conn and Ortiz display their expertise in both exegetical and practical theology. Complementing their scholarly and specific yet masterfully succinct and readable presentation is the extensive 36-page works cited section that is an invaluable and unparalleled collection of references for future study.

Urban Ministry would be a primary text for a university or seminary course on ministry in urban contexts. The treatment of the Lutheran understanding of the two realms, however, would be a welcomed theological addition to the rich exegetical treasures examined. Also, a more sacramental understanding of God's work and the church's work in the world would also provide an incarnational and theological foundation that has not been adequately explored. Informing observations with a hermeneutic of the two kinds of righteousness and the relationship between law and gospel would make this enormously useful text even better. As a refreshingly exhaustive, provocative, relevant, and practical opus, though, *Urban Ministry* will serve many current and future urban church workers quite well as both a textbook and a reference book for grappling with the various complexities of and ripe opportunities for ministry in twenty-first-century urban contexts.

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***Who Do I Say That You Are? Anthropology and the Theology of Theosis in the Finnish School of Tuomo Mannermaa.* By William W. Schumacher. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010. 203 pages. Paperback. \$24.00.**

This book by our Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, colleague in historical theology renders a distinctive service on two levels. First, Schumacher makes a vigorous case for a more attentive and nuanced discussion of theological anthropology amongst confessional Lutherans. Second, he offers a concise and helpful overview of the main tenets of the new Luther research emanating from Helsinki over twenty-five years, examining this scholarship in its ecumenical setting and critically engaging it on the basis of the data in Luther's writings. Both of these factors make this volume worthy of reading and study.

Noting that the last two centuries have witnessed ideological shifts resulting in a fragmented anthropology, Schumacher points to the close relationship between what we say of Christ and what we say about humanity. We cannot know ourselves as creatures without a right knowledge of our creator, which is given only in Christ. Drawing on Luther and supplemented

Mark. By Robert H. Stein. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. 823 pages. Hardcover. \$54.99.

Simply put, Stein writes well, and knows a lot, and because he does, the reader will come away knowing more as well. Among recent Markan commentators, Stein stands out. While not as boldly original as Joel Marcus (Anchor, 2009), Robert Stein's work outshines R.T. France (Eerdmans, 2002) for helpful insight and fair-mindedness. Stein writes in a way that is magisterial without being off-putting, and is a genuine pleasure to read.

Stein approaches the second Gospel from within the Evangelical tradition and takes an essentially conservative stance towards the text. Not surprisingly, he begins the commentary with an argument for traditional Markan authorship. To support this position, he cites Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius, and Jerome. For someone offering a Bible study, this kind of attention to detail is pure gold. Whether or not you agree with Stein on any given pericope is hardly relevant. What matters as you write your sermon is that you now have a conversation partner, and someone who can point you quickly to cross references and note parallels, both from the Old Testament and from the larger Greco-Roman world.

At times, though, Stein is strangely timid. For instance, his overall discussion of Jesus' baptism is a treasure trove, with cross references to all parts of the Bible. Yet, he then spends a very long paragraph asserting that there is no meaning or symbolic value for the Holy Spirit coming in the form of a dove. Stein's explanation borders on the bizarre. To those who suggest that the dove visualizes the coming of the Holy Spirit, Stein answers, "Such an explanation might be useful to explain the 'event' for Jesus, but for Mark and his audience, this would have been unnecessary. The Old Testament does not require such a visible sign for its readers to understand the coming of the Spirit upon individuals, for the texts explain this sufficiently without such imagery" (57). One wonders whether Stein suffers from a lack of imagination, or simply wants the Spirit to come without means. (How would he deal with the Spirit coming bodily in Luke 3:22?)

Again, Stein shows odd restraint when commenting on the Feeding of the Five Thousand. He strangely remarks that when it comes to the twelve baskets of leftover bread, it "is best not to see any symbolic significance" (314). He later adds emphatically, "The twelve baskets do not have any direct symbolic value" (317). To see the baskets as corresponding to the New Israel established by the twelve apostles is hardly a stretch or a flight into allegory. At times, Stein appears afraid or unable to see what is plainly before his face. On the other hand, Stein does note other helpful details, including the fact that the five thousand reclined as in a banquet, and that the loaves, as well as Jesus' actions, "would later bring to mind the Lord's Supper" (315). In short, Stein is good on

some matters, and not so much on others. Given the world of biblical scholarship, I judge a half loaf better than none at all.

Indeed, as one reads, be prepared to be surprised. For those who have grown weary of the New Perspective and its concomitant denial of the atonement, Stein speaks forcefully of Jesus' death as a true ransom. He writes, "The forgiveness of sins, according to the OT, involves the death of a sacrificial victim and the shedding of innocent blood" (666). Such a formerly pedestrian assertion is welcome indeed. Less surprisingly, Stein here and there makes negative statements about infant baptism, without really making an argument (461-462). This sort of thing is hardly worth noting, except to say that his anti-sacramental bias then tends to blind him elsewhere.

Finally, I enjoyed Stein's description of the Last Supper, and, here as elsewhere, I learned quite a bit. His comparisons between the Supper and the Passover are illuminating, and good fodder for Bible study. When it comes to the real presence, however, Stein has predictably little to say, and nothing positive. Yet, he does offer a bit of liturgical commentary: "All drank from a single cup. Although there are hygienic reasons for the use of individual cups in the present celebration of the Lord's Supper, that the disciples drank from a common cup emphasized the oneness of the church as the body of Christ in a powerful way that is lacking in drinking from small individual cups" (651). Somehow, though, I doubt his liturgical admonition will inspire many of us as a call to arms. I too promote the common cup, but would rather drink the small, individual cups with my fellow Lutherans than Stein's big cup that is essentially empty.

Peter J. Scaer

***The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon.* By Douglas J. Moo. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2008. 471 + xvi pages. Hardcover. \$44.00.**

Authors of the Pillar New Testament Commentary series, of which Moo's *Colossians and Philemon* is the tenth volume, treat contemporary scholarship "without getting mired in undue technical detail" (so series editor, D.A. Carson, viii). Series authors assume that the best response to Scripture is "with reverence, a certain fear, a holy joy, [and] a questing obedience" (vii). In keeping with this intent, Moo structures his "Introduction to Colossians" around the following questions: 1) to whom was the letter written?; 2) who wrote it?; 3) when and where was it written?; 4) why was it written?; 5) what is the letter about?; and 6) how is it organized? To cut to the chase: Moo believes that Paul wrote canonical Colossians from Rome in about AD 60-61 to confront a syncretistic "false teaching" at Colossae that denigrated Christ (25-71, especially 46). So, in opposition to the assumptions of most scholars

influenced by historical criticism, Moo believes Colossians is neither pseudepigraphal nor deutero-Pauline: "There is no shred of evidence that the Pauline authorship of the whole or any part of this epistle was ever disputed until the nineteenth century" (30, favorably citing D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* [4th ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990], 576). My summary does scant justice to the care with which Moo discusses the different questions involved and arrives at conclusions that will be most welcome to many Lutherans. While demonstrating an impressive command of the scholarship on both Colossians (3-24) and Philemon (357-60), Moo decides most issues exegetically, grounding conclusions on insights contained in his verse-by-verse exposition of the two letters. Naturally, I am most interested in Moo's treatment of Philemon (Introduction, 361-78; commentary, 379-442). Like most commentators, Moo has difficulty determining what Philemon is about: while not slavery, he thinks "fellowship" (378; cf. Phlm 6a, 17a). His arguments, however, are based on sparse evidence (one brief paragraph, 378). Could we "go Lutheran" and maintain that Philemon really is about the gospel (cf. "The Gospel in Philemon," *CTQ* 71 [2007]: 71-83, based on Phlm 18-19a)? While Moo would not agree, his overall treatment of Philemon has much to commend it.

John G. Nordling

The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology. Edited by Mary B. Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 321 pages. Hardcover, \$84.99. Paperback, \$30.99.

In the schism of the eleventh century, something new revealed itself. The ancient catholicity in which bishops recognized their fundamental need for one another was tragically lost. Eastern and Western churches would now develop theological trajectories not only in isolation from one another, but perhaps even in opposition to one another. East and West no longer saw themselves as branches rooted in a single vine; now they were separate species whose branches grew ever narrower, acquiring a brittle character. If such a schism is to be healed, then eastern and western churches must engage one another, not merely ecumenically, but theologically. Toward this end, the new collection of essays under the title *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* is a worthy beginning.

The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology offers a rich collection of essays from a variety of authors who share the Eastern Orthodox perspective. Eastern Orthodoxy's devotion to the patristic tradition is well known. This book, however, makes a conscious effort to move beyond a mere repristination of the patristic tradition. The collection of essays is divided into two parts. The first ten essays focus on the doctrinal roots of Eastern Orthodox churches. In this first part, essays cover doctrinal topics familiar to the Western

dogmatic tradition, such as Scripture and tradition, the Trinity, Christology, and eschatology. The Eastern perspective, however, makes itself known in the strong anthropological dimension that permeates these essays. The conviction that the theological description of God entails the spiritual description of humanity makes these doctrinal essays rich ground for theological reflection.

The final eight essays are devoted to contemporary developments in Eastern Orthodoxy. These essays describe the neo-patristic revival that originated in the last century and continues to bear fruit in today's context. The authors of these essays want the reader to view the story of the church's return to its sources as a return to an ancient theological conversation. Thus, this collection of essays strikes an optimistic tone, hopeful that through theological engagement Eastern and Western churches can rediscover a common root and realize a true catholicity.

For this volume, catholicity is the ultimate expression of divine love. This love is located in Christ crucified, through whom God has embraced a need for humanity. By subsisting in this love, therefore, one must see the other—even one's enemy—as a necessity for one's own wholeness. While the reader may not embrace everything that is offered in these essays, an engagement with this collection is nevertheless sure to inspire a return to the sources; and in this return, it is hoped that catholicity may triumph over ideology and that churches, in spite of their divisions, may begin to recognize their fundamental need for one another.

James G. Bushur

***Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction.* By James L. Resseguie. Grand Rapids: Baker Press, 2005. 288 Pages. Paperback. \$28.00.**

Very few books start so poorly and end so well. Resseguie's work on narrative criticism begins unpromisingly. The author compares new interpretative disciplines to unwelcome guests, interlopers who arrive late to the party and then shake up the old order. It all sounds so new and exciting. But then Resseguie bows to all the familiar gods, crossing off the checklist of politically correct opinions. He praises feminist criticism, which "turns a corrective eye" to the evils of "patriarchal readings of the New Testament" (1). He then pays homage to "Postcolonial biblical criticism," which exposes "imperial domination" and "Eurocentric perspectives that cloud the understanding of the New Testament" (2). Finally, Resseguie seeks to establish his credentials as a hipster, praising deconstructive criticism, which supposedly upsets the "stodgy traditionalists" (2). At this point, this reader was ready to give up on the book. This is the kind of movie I have seen before.

Surprisingly, the book got better—much better. In fact, this is the kind of text that would have been helpful during my seminary formation. For those raised on individual Bible verses taken out of context—for those taught a kind of parody of the *sensus literalis unus*, for those who are trained to see the trees but are blinded to the forest—Resseguie’s work is an eye-opener. He encourages us not only to read the Bible more closely, but also to see it more broadly. Having used the microscope of dictionaries and grammar, we are invited to consider the whole, to recognize that the biblical books are more than individual words and verses strung together. Rather, they form a unified whole, a narrative unity.

Resseguie uses much of the book to describe the exegetical role of narrative criticism, beginning with the discipline of rhetoric. For instance, he notes how authors play with verbal repetition to link narratives together, as, for example, in the Gospel of John, when Peter, having denied Jesus three times, warms himself by a charcoal fire (John 18:18). At his resurrection, Jesus invites his disciples to a meal of bread and fish, cooked on a charcoal fire (John 21:9). The meal by the charcoal fire then leads to Peter’s threefold declaration of love. In the New Testament, these are the only two instances of the word (*anthrakia*). Viewed with the microscope, there is nothing meaningful about a charcoal fire. Yet, from a narrative point of view, the message is clear. As Resseguie notes, “The verbal thread of the ‘charcoal fire’ ties the two antithetical events together: Peter’s professed love for Jesus reverses his desertion. The verbal repetition clarifies for the reader that denial is not the end of the story” (43). Thus, the evangelist John skillfully weaves together Peter’s threefold denial with his threefold restitution. Another example of this phenomenon can be found in the Gospel of Mark, where the “tearing” of the skies (Mark 1:10) links Jesus’ baptism to the “tearing” of the temple curtain (Mark 15:38) and therefore to Jesus’ death (44). Again, we see how Jesus’ admonition “you of little faith” links the stories of the stilling of the storm (Matthew 8:23–27) and Peter’s walking on water (Matthew 14:22–33). Other examples of verbal repetition abound.

Expanding upon this idea, Resseguie notes how the New Testament authors make use of themes. A good example of this can be found in Mark 6–8. Within these three chapters, Mark records the two bread miracles (feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand); tells us of a Syrophenician woman who, when rebuffed in her request for bread, then asks for crumbs; and records an awkward discussion of the disciples who have brought with them only “one loaf” of bread. Again, the microscope of grammar and the dictionary are not enough. Resseguie writes,

By reiterating the key words “bread,” “loaves,” or “crumbs” in these narratives in Mark 6–8, the evangelist suggests that the “one loaf” sufficient for their needs is Jesus himself. The Gentile woman recognized

that Jesus could supply her needs; the disciples apparently needed more time to come to this conclusion. Although Mark lacks John's "I am the bread of life" discourse after the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:35-51), he does not need that lengthy discourse. Instead he has tied together separate narratives with the key word "bread" to form a theme similar to that of the Fourth Gospel: Jesus is sufficient for every need. (48)

This kind of exegesis opens up the New Testament and leads us further down the path of understanding. Extend Resseguie's narrative analysis to the Lord's Supper and we have arrived home. Jesus is the bread, the one loaf, who remains present with us in the Eucharist.

Resseguie then moves to "type-scenes." He writes, "Just as we recognize Westerns or detective novels by their fixed constellation of patterns, type-scenes in ancient literature have a fixed pattern of events" (52). As an example, he offers up the story of Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4), comparing it to the betrothal-type scenes of Abraham's servant and Rebekah (Gen 24), Jacob's encounter with Rachel (Gen 29), as well as Moses and Zipporah (Exod 2). When Jesus meets the woman at the well, we are watching a type of betrothal, as the Jewish Savior comes to embrace the Gentile woman, becoming a bridegroom for the church throughout the world.

Some readers may be nervous about this type of reading, but there is no need to fret. To say that the Gospels are narratives does not mean that they are fiction. They are fully fact, a true history of what actually happened. Yet, the evangelists were also skillful writers, weaving together theological themes throughout their narratives, which come to a climax in the crucifixion. To recognize this fact is to lift up our eyes and to see that the evangelists' history is also the story of our salvation. The evangelists are seers who recognize that God's hand has written the novel of our salvation.

Perhaps a good class in literature or poetry would be helpful for anyone wanting to study the Bible. Doing so would remind us that reading is an art as well as a science. In the meantime, I would urge readers to sit back and enjoy the book. Ignore the opening credits, but then stay and watch until the end.

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