

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

# CTQ

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1994

# **The Symposia of Concordia Theological Seminary (January 1994)**

## **THE NINTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY**

### **"The World of Qumran and Its Implications for the Study of the Bible"**

Tuesday, January 18, 1994

- 9:00 a.m. "Isaiah in Music and Art." The Reverend Victor Albers, Teaneck, New Jersey (Loeche 2).  
"The Genealogical Structure of Genesis and Its Implications for Interpretation." Professor David Adams, Ann Arbor, Michigan (Loeche 5).  
"Ritual Washings at Qumran and Christian Baptism." Dr. Patrick Bayens, Lexington, Kentucky (Loeche 10).
- 10:00 a.m. Chapel Service
- 10:30 a.m. Morning Coffee
- 10:45 a.m. "The Gospel into the World on Both Legs: Justification by Grace for Christ's Sake through Faith." The Reverend R. A. Haak, Benton City, Washington (Loeche 2).  
"The Adam-Christ Analogy in Romans 5." Professor Ken Schurb, Ann Arbor, Michigan (Loeche 4).  
"An Examination of Gnostic Texts (Nag Hammadi) for Their Theology of Gender in Light of Current Feminist Theology." The Reverend David Witten, Danville, Kentucky (Loeche 9).
- 1:00 p.m. Welcome and Introduction
- 1:15 p.m. "The Biblical Texts of Qumran: Implications for Biblical Interpretation and Research." Dr. Eugene Ulrich, Co-editor of the Official Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Department of Antiquities of the State of Israel; Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.
- 2:15 p.m. "The Ancient Text of Numbers: Evidence from Qumran." Dr. Nathan R. Jastram, Assistant Professor of Theology, Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois.

- 3:00 p.m. Afternoon Tea
- 3:30 p.m. "Continencc and Monasticism in Qumran and Its Biblical-Historical Ambience." Dr. Douglas McC. L. Judisch, Professor of Exegetical Theology (Old Testament Exegesis), Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 4:15 p.m. "Existential *Angst* and Eschatological Tension: 'Now' and 'Not Yet' in Romans 7:14-25, 1QS 11 (Community Rule, Manual of Discipline) and 1QH (Thanksgiving Hymns)." Professor Lane A. Burgland, Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology (New Testament Exegesis), Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner
- Wednesday, January 19, 1994
- 8:30 a.m. "The Messiah at Qumran: The Use of the Old Testament in Qumran's Messianic Portrayals." Dr. Dean O. Wenthe, Chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology, Professor of Exegetical Theology (Old Testament Exegesis), Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 9:15 a.m. "Dualism in the Literature of Qumran." Dr. Walter A. Maier III, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology (Old Testament Exegesis), Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 10:00 a.m. Choral Matins: Schola Cantorum
- 10:30 a.m. Morning Coffee
- 11:00 a.m. "The Righteousness of Qumran's 'Teacher of Righteousness' and the Pauline 'Righteousness of God.'" Dr. Walter A. Maier, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Professor of Exegetical Theology (New Testament Exegesis), Concordia Theological Seminary.

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**THE SEVENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE  
LUTHERAN LITURGY AND HYMNODY**

Wednesday, January 19, 1994

- 1:00 p.m. Welcome and Introduction  
1:05 p.m. "Current Trends in Church Music: Toward a Theological Appraisal." The Reverend Harold L. Senkbeil, Elm Grove Lutheran Church, Elm Grove, Wisconsin, and Second Vice-President of the South Wisconsin District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.  
2:15 p.m. "Liturgics and Theology." Dr. Aidan J. Kavanagh, Professor of Liturgics and former Dean of the Faculty, Yale Divinity School, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.  
3:20 p.m. Coffee Break  
3:40 p.m. "Liturgical Paranoia." The Reverend Charles Evan-son, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana.  
4:30 p.m. Organ Recital: J. S. Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor; Felix Mendelssohn's Sonata Number 1. The Reverend David Rutter, Grace Lutheran Church, Lamar, Colorado.  
5:30 p.m. Dinner  
7:30 p.m. Alumni Reunions and Receptions

**THE SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM  
ON THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS**

**"*De Filio Dei*: The Third Article of the Augsburg Confession"**

Thursday, January 20, 1994

- 8:30 a.m. "God the Son in the Task of Missions." Dr. Gregory J. Lockwood, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology (New Testament Exegesis) and Missions, Concordia Theological Seminary.  
10:00 a.m. Choral Matins: Seminary Kantorei

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- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break
- 11:00 a.m. "God the Son and Hermeneutics." Dr. David P. Scaer, Professor of Systematic Theology and New Testament, Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 12:15 p.m. Luncheon
- 1:15 p.m. "God the Son and the Church as the Body of Christ." Dr. William C. Weinrich, Professor of Historical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 2:15 p.m. "God the Son and the Redemption of the World." Dr. Alan W. Borchertding, Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary.
- 3:15 p.m. Coffee Break
- 3:45 p.m. "God the Son and the Christian Life." Dr. David S. Yeago, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina.
- 6:30 p.m. Symposium Banquet
- Friday, January 21, 1994
- 8:45 a.m. "God the Son and the Knowledge of God." The Reverend Kenneth P. Wesche, St. Herman's Orthodox Parish, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Contributor to *Pro Ecclesia*.
- 10:00 a.m. Chapel Service
- 10:30 a.m. Coffee Break
- 11:00 a.m. Panel Discussion
- 12:15 p.m. Adjournment and Luncheon

# Proclaiming Life in Death: The Funeral Sermon

Donald L. Deffner

A young pastor went home for lunch to find his wife raped and strangled, his two toddlers left unharmed. "Mommie's sleeping upstairs, Daddy," they told him. "A man came to the house." Later the grieving father appeared on television, saying that he had forgiven his wife's murderer and asking others to find it in their hearts to do so too.

The funeral service was characterized by a sense of the victory of Easter. The bulletin stated the following:

The black border around this paper is not only for the memory of Sharon or for the grief of her loved ones, but for a sick humanity. All of us have felt in these days something of the terrible misery of what it means to be human. For a short time the mask was stripped away, and we caught a glimpse of the hell in human hearts—the hell of lovelessness, of hatred, of callousness to other people, of our ready willingness to consume each other. . . .

But it is precisely at this point—at graveside—that Christianity, if it is to have any meaning at all, must begin to make sense. For it was to the very depths of this tragic human existence that God came personally in Jesus Christ. And it was here that He redeemed us and our existence. . . .

The mercy is this, that we who have faced our humanity in all its horror are now enabled through Christ to realize our humanity in all its glory, the glory of love.

There was a quite different funeral service which took place some fifty years ago. As a Lutheran left the funeral service of her father, she overheard a Methodist friend say: "What a sermon! All about sin and death! That man must have been a great sinner!" The man being buried had, in fact, been a devout and loving Christian. The exact religious background of his daughter's friends—and what they actually heard at that funeral—cannot be ascertained at this point in time.

In any case, however, this episode and the episode recounted before it indicate the crucial nature of what people *hear*, especially

non-Lutherans, when they come to a funeral service. What is involved here? Many of the readers of this article will have preached hundreds more funeral sermons than its author. The goal here, however, is to focus on what constitutes a biblical funeral sermon while simultaneously directing readers to various resources.<sup>1</sup> The author is particularly indebted to the insights provided by Robert G. Hughes in *A Trumpet in Darkness: Preaching to Mourners*.<sup>2</sup>

### I. The Sermon in General

First of all, a funeral sermon is the announcement of the Good News that Jesus Christ has conquered death and the grave *for us*. It is biblical preaching that focuses on Calvary and the empty tomb, so that the mourners may deal with the reality of death and have the certain hope which God gives us for life now and the life to come in heaven. A funeral *sermon* therefore is basic and integral to the whole liturgy for the burial of the dead. Also, as Hughes suggests, "mourners may be emotionally ready, open to God's word in a way that secure individuals are not."<sup>3</sup> Defenses are down, life is disrupted, and there is a need to restore balance to life. "It has been the experience of clergy that greater vulnerability leads to heightened receptivity more often than to stubborn defensiveness."<sup>4</sup>

Yet there must be a balance in what is preached in the sermon—a balance between reference to the individual which is realistic (especially if the family knows the person far better than the pastor) and, on the other hand, delivering a sermon with a "to whom it may concern" flavor. The preacher is certainly to personalize the sermon, but without lauding the dead.<sup>5</sup>

"A Christian funeral sermon is for the living, not the dead." Pastors have heard that principle stated many times. Accordingly, how can the sensitive pastor take into account exactly where the mourners are in their process of grief? "If a death has been sudden and tragic, with the anesthetic of shock working its protective magic, one aim of the sermon may be to assist listeners to face death and begin to grieve."<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, when a person has lingered a long time before death, there may be a feeling of relief. In either case, people may feel guilt. How does one preach to the particular feelings and questions of the sorrowing?

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The funeral sermon is a key factor in a continuing pastoral relationship which the pastor has with the family—hopefully. Accordingly, even as the pastor interprets the biblical text selected very carefully, so he must study the listeners as well. He is an "active listener."<sup>7</sup> He must ask, "What is the mourners' story?"—that is, "What are their feelings and questions?"

## II. The Hearers of the Sermon

### A. *Phases of Mourning*

In his *Worship and Pastoral Care* William H. Willimon entitled one of his chapters "Liturgy and Life's Crises: The Funeral." There he speaks of three "rites of passage" through which people go at the death of a loved one. These three phases (quoting Van Gennep) are separation, transition, and reincorporation.<sup>8</sup>

#### 1. *Separation*

Willimon says he remembers a widow who asked him to go with her for a final look at her husband's body before the funeral. He was hesitant, knowing it could be a disturbing experience for her. But after she had touched her husband's cheek tenderly, she said: "He's cold. You can shut it now." She had proceeded through the separation from her husband. Willimon rightly states: "To avoid such separation is to postpone a necessary first step in the grief process and to run the risk of prolonging the pain of grief or dealing with grief in less productive ways."<sup>9</sup>

#### 2. *Transition*

A second phase is transition. One day a woman is married; the next day she is a widow. One day children have a father; the next day he is gone. Normal activities are suspended. The mourners are moving into a new status in life.

At this point the funeral service has a very important educative function. "Here the church says in effect, 'When death comes, these are things that we believe.'"<sup>10</sup> "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth—yea, saith the Spirit—that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

Particularly helpful at this time is the sheer "ministry of presence" to those who mourn. The author remembers A. R. Kretzmann saying that, when a parishioner of his was about to die, he would cancel other appointments and just "be there" with the family. Extensive conversation may not be necessary at times and certainly not such inappropriate comments as "I know just how you feel."

A pastor-friend of mine in Philadelphia says that, after his father died, one person after another stuck his head in his church-office door with comments of that nature until finally he was on the verge of vomiting. But then one friend came in and simply said, "I care." That assurance meant more to him than all the other comments.

But presence is not enough during this transitional stage. Words must be spoken. And the funeral sermon can do that speaking.

### *3. Reincorporation*

The third phase is reincorporation. The mourners are now separated from their loved one, and the Christian community seeks to help them in the time of transition. But now their friends help reincorporate them into the mainstream of life again. And the funeral sermon can point in that direction—of the continued love and support of the caring Christian community.<sup>11</sup>

### *B. Types of Death*

All these aspects of the mourners' stories—their feelings and questions—are contextual as a pastor prepares the funeral sermon. What are they asking? What are they trying to understand? Robert G. Hughes is particularly helpful here as he considers the various types of death which occur and the specific problems which may arise in the mourners.

#### *1. Prolonged Death*

For many people, Hughes says, in connection with death from cancer or another lingering illness, the "dynamics of chronic grief" are anger and depression. Families feel helpless. Maybe the doctor is blamed. Anger at God is also common. The long waiting period

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can also lead to depression. The pastor will want to take these elements into account and draw on the powerhouse of God's infallible word here, bringing in those passages which speak of Christian suffering and sorrow now in conjunction with the joy and hope and glory which is ours now and which is to come much more abundantly.<sup>12</sup>

## *2. Sudden Death*

In connection with sudden death by accident one sees the "dynamics of acute grief." Shock and disbelief can overwhelm the grievers. Or there can be intense anger at those who caused the accident. Guilt can also appear when a person asks himself such questions as these: "What could I have done to prevent the accident?" "If I had been there, would things be different?"<sup>13</sup>

Henry Sloan Coffin's experience at the death of his son is pertinent here. As the author recalls the account, his son had been driving along-side a river in New York late at night. He had not been drinking, nor was he on drugs. His car somehow veered off the road and went into the river, where he drowned. Later at his home, before the funeral, Coffin was sitting down when a woman passed by with a hot-dish in her hands, headed for the kitchen. "I'll never understand the will of God," she said worriedly, walking past Coffin. Coffin immediately arose and followed her into the kitchen. There he made the point that God is not the driver at the wheel of the car in an accident; He is not the madman pushing the button to detonate a bomb. When his son died, Coffin said, God's was the first tear to fall. God grieved, too.

Coffin also speaks of an earlier experience. In his senior year at school a good friend was killed in an automobile accident. Sitting in the chapel waiting for the funeral service to begin, he was filled with angry thoughts. Now, as the pastor started down the aisle toward the altar, he began to intone unctuously Job's famous words: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Coffin continues:

From the aisle seat where I was sitting, I could have stuck out my foot and tripped him up and might easily have done so, had my attention not been arrested by a still, small

voice, as it were, asking, "Coffin, what part of that sentence are you objecting to?" Naturally I thought it was the second part, "The Lord hath taken away," spoken all too facetiously by the priest. But suddenly I realized it was the first. Suddenly I caught the full impact of "The Lord gave": the world very simply is not ours; at best we're guests. It was not an understanding I relished nor one, certainly, to clear up all my objections to my friend's death. But as I sat quietly now at his funeral, I realized that it was probably the understanding against which all the spears of human pride had to be hurled and shattered. Then, thank God, the organist played Bach's great chorale prelude, *Christus Stand in Todes Band*. It was genuinely comforting. And it made me think that religious truths, like those of music, were probably apprehended on a deeper level than they were ever comprehended. . . . So the leap of faith was really a leap of action. Faith was not believing without proof; it was trusting without reservation.<sup>14</sup>

An interchange of the author's own experience may be appropriately retold here:

I have a personal friend on the West Coast who lost her twelve-year-old son to leukemia in just two weeks. He was a swimming companion of Mark Spitz. And she said to me many times: "Don't tell me that you can give me a good answer as to why John died." I didn't. But I did share the gospel with her, and added: "Ann, wouldn't you have rather had John those precious twelve years rather than not at all?"<sup>15</sup>

Of particular importance is that we avoid at such times some of the phrases which are challenged in "Myths About Death." One example is the assertion without qualification that death is "the will of God":

In Job 1:21 Job states: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But in the next verse Scripture says, "In all this Job did

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not sin or charge God with wrong." He did not "charge God foolishly" (KJV).

God *permits* death at a certain time, and He knows when we will die (Job 14:5). But He never *desires* man's death: "I do not enjoy seeing a sinner die" (Ezekiel 33:11, TEV).

Death comes upon us because we are all sinful mortals. "Death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Romans 5:12). "By a man came death" (1 Corinthians 15:21, RSV).<sup>16</sup>

Doctrinally, of course, a distinction is necessary between the permissive will and the causative will of God. His permissive will obviously embraces all events, including death. His causative will too may, certainly, be involved in the time of death, but we are not in a position to say in any given case.

There is also a distinction to be made between the stingless death of the Christian and the sting-filled death which comes to the unbeliever. But the words which we use to describe the Christian's death can be misunderstood by a grieving mourner, including such phrases as "God took him," or "God called him home," or "it pleased God to take him to Himself in heaven." Such language may not be comforting to a woman who put her two-and-one-half-week-old child down on her waterbed for a nap and returned to find the child face down, suffocated, dead. What we have moved to here is the circumstance of untimely death.

### 3. *Untimely Death*

The occurrence of a stillbirth or sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is hardly the time to say "it was the will of God." At an untimely death the mourners' responses may be feelings of personal guilt, anger at facing an unseen enemy, blaming of others (as when parents blame each other in the case of an accident), or the theological wrestling that goes on during the terminal illness of a child: "Why did he suffer so?" "Why did God allow this to happen?" "Why didn't God hear our prayers for a cure?"<sup>17</sup>

Particularly tragic at such a time is the comment of the naive friend who suggests that "God took the child because God needed

him up in heaven more than the parents did." Instead the preacher points to "a God who is self-giving, whose Son offered His life for the life of all people, who shares human suffering, and who seeks the best [for us] in a less than perfect world."<sup>18</sup> References to baptism, in which God made the little one His own, will also be a key element in the sermon in such circumstances. More will be said on baptism later. Hughes suggests the following:

Pastors can help by encouraging parents to grieve. Later, after feelings are vented, parents may be ready to see that they do not have power over life and death, that they are human and fallible, and that chains of events cannot be controlled. Finally, they may be able to hear the good news that they too are children of a loving God who can reform their self-images (by the power of the Holy Spirit) and know their identity as God's forgiven people.<sup>19</sup>

#### *4. Old Age*

Several dynamics may be apparent in those who mourn the aged Christian. There may be acceptance, even welcoming of death as a release. There may be anxiety because of a feeling of abandonment. There may be guilt, especially when a person has died in an institutional setting. Or there may be anger when one person cared for the deceased more than the other siblings, or when there are quarrels over the possessions left behind.<sup>20</sup>

All these factors will be concerns of the pastor preparing to preach the funeral sermon. The themes will be thankfulness to God for the blessings of a full life, death as a release, and so on. But "if the message of God's presence and comfort can be linked to the promised support of pastor and congregation, the sermon will be good news indeed."<sup>21</sup>

#### *5. Suicide*

Guilt, anger, and shame can all surface in cases of self-inflicted death. Families often have repeated warnings well in advance of a potential suicide. Hughes cites authorities who say that "fully eighty per cent of all completed suicides do in fact speak of their intentions beforehand."<sup>22</sup> But John Hewett's observation is worth noting:

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Suicide is an act completed in solitude, and one person is responsible for it—the deceased. . . . No person can single-handedly prevent a suicide unless that person can live without sleep and spend twenty-four hours a day restraining the potential suicide.<sup>23</sup>

What can the preacher say? Luther's words of 1532 are apropos here:

I don't share the opinion that suicides are certainly to be damned. My reason is that they do not wish to kill themselves but are overcome by *the power of the devil*. They are like a man who is murdered in the woods by a robber. However, this ought not be taught to the common people, lest Satan be given an opportunity to cause slaughter, and I recommend that the popular custom be strictly adhered to according to which it [the suicide's corpse] is not carried over the threshold, etc. Such persons do not die by free choice or by law, but our Lord God will dispatch them as He executes a person through a robber. Magistrates should treat them quite strictly, although it is not plain that their souls are damned. However, they are examples by which our Lord God wishes to show that the devil is powerful and also that we should be diligent in prayer. But for these examples we would not fear God. Hence He must teach us in this way.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever the circumstances of death, however (in any of those situations described before), the message we have to declare is always the same in its essence.

### III. The Basic Message of the Sermon

#### A. *The Cross of Christ*

The burden of all good preaching in the church of Christ remains, as it always has been, the *cross* of Jesus Christ and the *resurrection* from the dead. Christ crucified and risen is to be the heart of the funeral sermon. For it is in Christ alone that the mourners have any true and lasting hope.

John Pless speaks well in his classic essay "Martin Luther: Preacher of the Cross":

For Luther the preaching that is shaped by the theology of the cross is proclamation that holds up Christ alone as Savior of the world. Any other theology is a theology of glory.<sup>25</sup>

The theology of the cross is also the answer to all the people of this world—Albert Camus and Ingmar Bergman and any others—who ask, "How can a loving God let the innocent suffer?" *The Compassionate Mind* takes this approach:

Our response is to point them to a properly understood *theology of the cross*.

God suffers in the suffering of Christ and cries out with the godforsaken God, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" As [Tobina] Dalton says, "Then God's being is in suffering and the suffering is in God's being itself, because God is love."

So God in Christ's death entered into our godforsakenness so all the godless and godforsaken can have reconciliation with Him. *No one*—the boy hung in *Night*, or the boy dying in *The Plague*, or the blonde girl raped and murdered in *Virgin Spring*—*no one* has loneliness, rejection, pain, or torture which God Himself has not absorbed in the cross of His Son.

When non-Christians lay aside their diminutive conception of God and cope with the godforsakenness in God (with Christ), they will have confronted the *true* God.

And then they must see this God alive in *us*.<sup>26</sup>

The theology of the cross—and resurrection—will implicitly respond to the questions which emerge from the grief process: "Why, God?" "What did I do to deserve this?" "God, where are You?" (Hughes provides a detailed homiletical treatment of these questions—and the sermonic response.) Hughes states:

The theology of the cross affirms the need for believers to

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wait, trusting in the action of God. In Christ the believer receives the forgiveness of sins and becomes a new person. At the same time the Scriptures affirm that believers remain lifelong sinners. For the believer who is simultaneously saint and sinner, waiting between the "already" of baptism into Christ and the "not yet" of the new being, waiting in obedience is part of what it means to be faithful.<sup>27</sup>

*B. Sacramental Connections*

And therein lies a key point which should also be central to every funeral sermon—recalling the baptism of the one who has died. As Wayne Menking has written:

Liturgically the funeral is understood as the conclusion of the baptismal liturgy. The water and the word bring the new creature into being, but its completion comes at the resurrection which is celebrated in the funeral. Thus the baptism and the funeral form the beginning and the end of the Christian life, which is itself the entire baptismal liturgy of moving between death and life, old and new, darkness and light.<sup>28</sup>

Proceeding, in this connection, from the sacrament of baptism to the sacrament of the altar, the question is frequently asked whether it is appropriate to celebrate the eucharist at a funeral. A colleague, however, has observed that this question should be phrased: "Is it appropriate to have a funeral at a celebration of the eucharist?" He believes it is, as does the author. An appropriate eucharistic funeral, however, would be quite unlike one conducted by an avant-garde preacher on the West Coast in the author's presence. The pastor's sockless, sandalled feet were enough of a distraction. But, worse, in the sermon he said: "Frank, as you all know, loved a party. [It was well known that the man was an alcoholic.] Well, Frank is with the Lord now and enjoying the greatest party he ever attended—in heaven." Later, when the pastor began the eucharistic portion of the service, he welcomed the people to the chancel with abandon: "Let the bash begin!" Clearly the mourners need a far more sublime and profound "word from the Lord."

### *C. The Resurrection of the Dead*

In addition to all the questions alluded to earlier, there is the ultimate question: "What happens at death—and beyond?" Here the preacher is called to proclaim with *parrhesia* and conviction: "Our death is certain. But our resurrection is also certain. For God has made us His own in baptism. He has promised: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee' (Hebrews 13:5). 'Because I live, ye shall live also' (John 14:19)."

As Luther puts it, "We are to sleep until He comes and knocks on the grave and says, 'Dr. Martin, get up.' Then I will arise in a moment and will be eternally happy with Him."<sup>29</sup> We shall be "happy with Him." What more can we say to the mourners and our own grieving spirits? Three little words, "with the Lord," are all we need to know about heaven and be content!<sup>30</sup>

## **IV. The Structure of the Sermon**

To proceed now more specifically to the composition of the sermon, about ninety years ago John Henry Jowett wrote these words which are still as true today:

No sermon is ready for preaching, nor ready for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short pregnant sentence as clear as a crystal. I find the getting of that sentence the hardest, the most exacting, and the most fruitful labor in my study.<sup>31</sup>

The preacher would likewise do well to prepare a fifteen-word summary of his sermon in terms of law and gospel, problem and resolution. Already implicit, of course, in such a summary are the purposes of the funeral sermon in general—to help the hearers to face the reality of death and to assist them in finding comfort in the certainty of the resurrection unto eternal life for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Hughes suggests a progression or sequence which, of course, may vary with the particular circumstances. There is an interweaving of three stories: the dead person's, the mourners', and God's. We begin with the story of the death, with a balanced reference to the

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deceased. Certainly the dead person's name can be used in a proper way. Then there is a shift to the mourners' stories. The primary focus of the sermon is the survivors. What questions are they asking? Then there is a smooth transition into the text, such as the depiction of the grieving disciples after Good Friday or of the two disciples of Emmaus, grieving the death of their Lord. (A clear identification can be made between the first-century mourners in both these texts and the twentieth-century mourners hearing the sermon.)

Whatever the text, however, the law (the "malady" as Caemmerer would call it) is clearly before the mourners, if the casket is in the church. Here the preacher will be particularly concerned about the proper distinction between law and gospel—and the proper quantity of each. The "line of direction," however (as Gerhard Aho would say), is towards the proclamation of the good news of the gospel. Hughes argues rightly:

The most effective text for funeral sermons is a hinge. At the grave of Lazarus we not only see Jesus weep, but we hear the good news, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). In the upper room we not only sense the disciples' fear, but we hear the reassuring, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). In the midst of these narratives the action shifts from human anguish to God's promise of help.<sup>32</sup>

And so we focus on the death and resurrection of Christ—for us! That is the heart of funeral preaching for Lutheran pastors.

### V. An Example of the Sermon

The following example of a funeral sermon once preached by the author may not follow Hughes' schema in every detail. It is, however, one *approach* in a particular situation, and readers may see in it some of the elements which have been discussed here. The deceased was a relative's husband. About fifty-three years old, he was a Christian, although not very active in a church. The author was asked to preach the sermon, with only a few family members present.

There is reference in the Bible to one man who never died. His name was Enoch. Scripture says God translated him directly from life on earth to being in the presence of God in heaven.

A little girl was once asked to tell the story of Enoch. She said: "Well, Enoch and God were good friends. And they used to take long walks in Enoch's garden. And one day God said, 'Enoch, you look tired. Why don't you come up to My place and stay and rest awhile?' And so he did."

In a sense, we can say that God said the same thing to Max. God said: "Max, you look very tired. Why don't you come up to My place and stay and rest?"

And that poetic way of looking at Max's passing away from our presence may comfort us. But we do not say that God *caused* Max's death. Well-meaning people may say "God called him home," or "God took him." But God does not cause death. We do—for we are all mortal—all sinners.

Death comes upon us all because of our sinful condition—our sins of commission and omission which place ourselves first and God last in our lives. Sin is just that—self-absorption and self-centeredness. Sin is ignoring God and planning our lives as if He did not exist. It is having a meager prayer life or no prayer life at all. It is having little to do with Christ's church on earth—fallible as we all admit the church is as an institution. Sin is forgetting one's baptism by which we were forgiven our sins by the gracious redemptive power of God's Holy Spirit. It is not going to holy communion where we receive Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. In sum, sin is living one's life independent from God.

A memorial service concerns not just the dead, but the living. God calls us all—people in the church and outside it—to repentance. We have a gracious God who does not desire our punishment and death, but who sent His only beloved Son into the world to suffer and die on the cross for our sins.

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God is not a God of "cheap grace"—easy forgiveness. The payment for our sin cost Him the life of His Son, our Savior. But *by* Christ's death and resurrection we are forgiven people. God declares us righteous through Christ's atoning work for us. We cannot save ourselves. Christ did. And He wants the assurance and peace and comfort and hope of that forgiveness to be a living reality in our daily lives. God says: "I have graven thee on the palms of My hands. I have redeemed thee. Thou art Mine."

Max believed that promise. He was baptized and knew he was a forgiven child of God. He read much, including E. W. A. Koehler's *Summary of Christian Doctrine*. Max and I talked about that book and another book in which he was intensely interested concerning the nature of Christ. In February in our conversation I said I would get a copy of another book for him, and he was looking forward to receiving it. Because of his illness, I was not able to put it into his hands. It was entitled *life with God*. And that is what Max has right now—Life with God. We need to know only three words about Max's state right now. The words are "with the Lord." That is what life eternal is—being in the loving personal presence of God Himself. Nothing can be more wonderful.

We here today are human, and we have sorrow at losing Max. But Max would not have us grieve. For he is "with the Lord"!

Just imagine—just *imagine* if Eloise were going through all of Max's papers, and she found a letter from him which was like the following one. Can you imagine him writing these words?

A Final Letter to Eloise and My Sons: "Whenever I die, please do not grieve for me. I am beyond pain—by God's grace in the presence of our Lord. *You* are the ones in pain. That grieves me *now*. But in heaven I will not know pain.

"So if you hurt, I am truly sorry. But dwell on

the *joys*—the *many* joyful times God permitted us to have together. God has been most merciful and gracious to us!

"Remember our common faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He lives in our hearts. And think of me as living in your hearts and lives now, too.

"So 'do not sorrow as those who have no hope.' I will see you again! I love each of you so much—each in a very special and different way.

"So now rejoice! Christ died for us—and rose again! And because of that I will see you again!"

Max is at peace. Let us be at peace then. And let us find our comfort in Him alone who gives solace to our grief—Jesus Christ, who forgives us all our sins and seals to us the sure and certain hope of life eternal. Amen.

Every different occasion, of course, will dictate a different approach. (One much admired brother in Chicago preached at fifty-four funerals in one year.)

## VI. The Context of the Sermon

Obviously, the most appropriate place for the funeral service of a Christian is the church. Furthermore, as Willimon says:

A funeral may be primarily for the grieving family, but it is not exclusively for them. It is for all of us. A funeral, like every other act of Christian worship, is for the church! . . . Positive pastoral values are lost when any worship service—wedding, funeral, baptism, or eucharist—becomes a private, noncommunal affair.<sup>33</sup>

Loren Shiley also affirms the conducting of the funeral in the church and speaks of the artificiality of the funeral home with the "shielded" family in a side room. He states in addition:

What about singing? That's another reason why a funeral home atmosphere is artificial . . . rarely is there anything

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more than a few Scripture readings, poetry, and a mini-talk. The world's most universal language is music and to say we cannot stand music at a funeral is to say we have nothing to sing about.

The purpose of a Christian funeral is not to hear sentimental, syrupy funeral music but the purpose is worship . . . focusing our attention on the greatness and goodness of God. It is a marvelous time to sing the great and grand hymns of Christian hope. Families should not choose hymns which make them emotional but should choose hymns which have a devotional uplift. No Christian would wish to be so overcome with grief that he cannot join in thanks to Christ for overcoming death itself!<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, the funeral sermon can also well include appropriate hymn verses, especially a favorite hymn of the person who has died.<sup>35</sup>

### Conclusion

The conducting of the funeral service in the house of God and, yet more specifically, the preaching of a funeral sermon in the midst of this service is simply one application of the ministry to the people of God in general.<sup>36</sup> In all his service to his flock the faithful pastor lives as Paul tells the Philippians (1:23-26): "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."

### Endnotes

1. This article is adapted from an essay presented to the Pastoral Conference of the Minnesota South District of the LCMS, meeting in Mankato, Minnesota, on October 22, 1990.

2. Robert G. Hughes, *A Trumpet in Darkness: Preaching to Mourners* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). Hughes is Director of the Academy of Preachers and new president (beginning in 1990) of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. His book is the best resource on the funeral sermon. It is used as a required text in the senior class called "Preaching Workshop" in Concordia Theological Seminary.
3. Hughes, p. 9.
4. Ibid.
5. Hughes, p. 10.
6. Ibid.
7. Hughes, p. 13.
8. William H. Willimon, "Liturgy and Life's Crises: The Funeral," *Worship and Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 102.
9. Willimon, p. 103.
10. Willimon, p. 104.
11. Willimon, pp. 105-106. In the months that follow loneliness can also assail the grievers. One of the finest pastoral aids in this connection is Elizabeth Elliot, "Those Who Are Left" (*Christianity Today*, February 27, 1976). It could well be given to every widow and widower.
12. Hughes, pp. 24-27.
13. Hughes, pp. 27-30.
14. Quoted in Willimon, p. 112.
15. See note 1 above.
16. Donald L. Deffner, *Myth or Faith: An Issue-Oriented Adult Instruction Course* (unpublished manuscript); see also Deffner, *Myths about the Lutheran Church* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, n.d.), p. 35.

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17. Hughes, p. 31.
  18. Hughes, p. 32.
  19. Hughes, pp. 32-33.
  20. Hughes, pp. 33-34.
  21. Hughes, p. 35.
  22. John H. Hewett, *After Suicide* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), p. 23.
  23. Hewett, pp. 75-76.
  24. Martin Luther, "Suicides Are Not Necessarily Damned" (April 7, 1532, No. 222), *Luther's Works: American Edition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), 54, ed. and trans. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 29.
  25. John Pless, "Martin Luther: Preacher of the Cross," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 51:2-3 (April-July 1987), p. 96. He particularly cites Luther's precise summary of the theology of the cross in Theses 18-26 of the Heidelberg Theses of 1518. Also helpful is the depiction of Luther's move from preaching "Christ as example" to preaching Christ as *donum*, p. 96.
  26. Donald L. Deffner, *The Compassionate Mind: Theological Dialog with the Educated* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), pp. 81-82.
  27. Hughes, p. 63.
  28. Wayne Menking, "The Cross as a Way of Life: Towards Understanding and Using Luther's Small Catechism as a Resource for Spiritual Growth and Development in Lutheran Congregations" (unpublished Doctor of Ministry dissertation, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California, 1990), p. 152.
  29. *D. Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*

- (Weimar, Hermann Böhlau and Nachfolger, 1883- , popularly called the "Weimar Ausgabe") 37, p. 151, quoted in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 415.
30. Also recommended are two pieces of literature (to which John Pless has drawn the author's attention) which stress the resurrection in the funeral sermon: (1.) "The Resurrection and the Life," in Ian Siggins, *Martin Luther's Doctrine of Christ* (Yale, 1970); and (2.) Gerald Krispin "The Consolation of the Resurrection in Luther," *Lutheran Theological Review* II:1 (Autumn-Winter 1989-1990), pp. 37-51.
31. John Henry Jowett, *The Preacher, His Life and Work* (New York: Doran, 1912), p. 133.
32. Hughes, p. 88.
33. Willimon, p. 115.
34. Loren Shiley, "The Christian Funeral," ed. Daniel Reuning (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1969).
35. In this connection see Robin A. Leaver, *The Funeral Sermon for Heinrich Schutz*, in "Music in the Service of the Church," ed. Carl Schalk (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985). In its original form the sermon would take about two hours to deliver; this encapsulated version fills twenty-four pages. It is especially noteworthy for its correlation of Christian doctrine with the treasures of Christian hymnody.
36. An interesting study entitled "Examining Clergy Funeral Practices," reporting the results of surveys, was presented by Clifford Bira of Flushing, Michigan, to the Circuit Counsellors' Conference of the Michigan District of the LCMS in autumn of 1988.

# Biographies of Luther: Converging on a Whole Man

Terry D. Thompson

The quincentennial of Martin Luther's birth in 1983 prompted many additions to the already enormous corpus of works about Luther, a somewhat ironic tribute given that Luther had not wished for any great notoriety.<sup>1</sup> In libraries around the world, some of the workers who placed new books about the reformer on the already full shelves undoubtedly wondered, "Who was this Luther?" This question is far more insightful than most of those asking it would realize, for while the libraries of the world have no shortage of books about Luther's thoughts, words, and actions, there is a distinct shortage of comprehensive biographies that include useful assessments of Martin Luther the man.

"Who was Luther?" is therefore an especially appropriate question to ask when surveying the new titles which mention him since, for those in the community of Reformation historians, Luther is often the figure around whom a whole career revolves. His identity and personality are of central concern for those scholars who approach Luther with a combination of the interest which we have in a family member and the scrutiny which we apply to a political candidate. Their concern, supported by the assumption that knowledge of an individual's personality is a key to an understanding of his actions, makes the person's identity a most appropriate and necessary topic indeed. A second appropriate question is where these new titles stand with respect to the historiography. Do they include new views, new approaches, or new analyses? To cut to the heart of both questions, are these dozen or two new books on Luther justified?

James M. Kittelson has suggested that the two characteristics of Martin Luther's life that a biography must treat are his accessible personality and his public career, which transcended his time and justifies scholarly interest in Luther today.<sup>2</sup> Earlier biographical treatments of Luther, usually slighting one or the other of these characteristics, have brought four perspectives regarding Luther into the mainstream of present-day thought.<sup>3</sup> Their writers most often drew caricatures of Luther as the heroic Protestant theologian or German nationalist leader, Luther as the instrument of the devil, Luther as the capitalist tool, or Luther as the psychological cripple.

Those biographies that portrayed Luther as a Protestant hero, from John Matthesius' late sixteenth-century hagiography through a number of more recent works, emphasized Luther's theology at the expense of his humanity. While perhaps useful for a Lutheran church that defined itself in terms of doctrine, they contributed much less of value to historians. The Luther-as-German-hero variant concentrated on Luther's German ethnicity at the expense of both his Christianity and sound scholarship, perhaps reaching its odious depths with Nazi Joseph Goebbels and William M. McGovern's American reply, *From Luther to Hitler*.<sup>4</sup> With their own set of priorities in mind, Roman Catholic biographers adopted the theological model but turned Protestant scholarship on its head and posited a Luther who was a creation of the devil (or who, at least, had completely misinterpreted the medieval church and its theology). From Cochlaeus in the sixteenth century to Hartmann Grisar in the twentieth, they pictured a twisted Luther bent on the destruction of the one true church.<sup>5</sup>

Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, two of the most influential thinkers of the nineteenth century, each prompted a new perspective on Martin Luther. Marx and his colleague Friedrich Engels portrayed Luther as a tool of the rising capitalist order. They and their followers, including modern playwright Dieter Forte, viewed Luther's life through a class-oriented economic prism and not surprisingly saw a Luther who, motivated by economics and loyalty to the princes, betrayed both Müntzer's revolt of the people and the gospel to which he had professed allegiance.<sup>6</sup> These Marxist portrayals followed the earlier theological perspectives in ignoring Luther's humanity. This humanity finally surfaced in those works that attempted to apply the tools of psychology to Luther's life. The most notorious of these works, Erik Erikson's "psychobiography" and John Osborne's play *Luther*, did address Luther's personality, but even in them Luther was a caricature, albeit one of a different sort.<sup>7</sup> In these historically inaccurate works he appeared as an emotional and psychological cripple, driven by cruel parents into a kind of half-humanity, condemned to perpetual adolescent behavior ("acting out" his psychoses in present-day language). These writers slighted or eliminated any intellectual development in Luther's life and portrayed his theology as simple-minded substitutions of the

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church for his father and Mary for his mother. Unsatisfactory as these works are to the historian, their impact on historiography has been positive, for the confrontation with these ugly pictures of the reformer spurred Luther scholars to write well-researched and more balanced portraits of Luther the man.

The result of these fresh encounters with Luther the man, as seen in the most recent group of biographies, is striking: Luther biographers are converging, each from their own perspective, on a truly remarkable sixteenth-century man. There remain marked differences in outlook; some works are certainly more readable and useful than others. But careful reading of modern-day representatives of each of the four approaches outlined above makes it clear that a new Luther is emerging—neither flawless nor incorrigible, simultaneously transcendent and human. Present-day agendas remain in these works, but the opinions of the writers no longer overpower their subject.

Gerhard Brendler's book, written in the DDR before unification, provides a useful illustration of the convergence.<sup>8</sup> Frequent and distracting digressions into Marxist interpretations of medieval history detract from the continuity of Brendler's narrative, and the book contains a number of unsupported assertions. Also his attempt to prove that Luther's societal association overwhelmed the gospel rests on the flawed assumption that Luther analyzed his world in terms of economic classes that had not even emerged at the time.<sup>9</sup> Here Brendler even contradicts himself, as he already devoted an entire chapter to the importance of the Bible for Luther, referring to the word as Luther's "second self" and noting its precedence over all else in the reformer's life.<sup>10</sup> Brendler nonetheless makes substantial advances beyond the earlier, narrower Marxist interpretations. For example, he commended Luther's accomplishments in triggering change, even referring to Luther's transcendence.<sup>11</sup> And while the terms of Brendler's analysis do not lend themselves to a comprehensive look at Luther the man, there are outlines of his attitudes and views at several points. Brendler's work is perhaps the strongest illustration of the convergence of scholarly biographies, since his work comes from what was probably the most rigid of the four perspectives and he wrote under a government that still enforced

ideological uniformity.

English Roman Catholic scholar John M. Todd's recent life of Luther similarly moves beyond his tradition's former orthodoxy.<sup>12</sup> The book admirably meets his stated goal of trying to present Luther the man, with a thorough picture of a principled Luther, driven by a passion for God and blessed with great integrity, intelligence, and sensitivity.<sup>13</sup> Todd occasionally leaves one wishing for a more thorough chronology of events, but this weakness does not substantially detract from either his effective portrayal of Luther's many roles or the over-all rhythm of the narrative. Leaving no doubt that he believes Luther to have been a medieval theologian and not a humanist, Todd interestingly placed Luther's loss of hope of reconciliation with Rome later than most writers place it—as late as the mid-1530's.<sup>14</sup> In other passages as well, Todd appears to minimize the distance between Luther and the ideals of Roman Catholicism while simultaneously detailing the failings of the church that Luther fought. In the end, while he criticizes the new evangelical church for doctrinal rigidity, he strongly endorses the reformer's work: ". . . the changes were qualitative and substantial. The 'Myth' began again to look less like a myth and more like the Gospel of the New Testament."<sup>15</sup>

Mercifully, no one has repeated Erikson's effort at a "psycho-biography." Several of the recent scholarly biographies have concentrated on Luther's humanity, providing well-documented and well-researched refutations of Erikson. One is Todd's, which was discussed above. Two other biographies that use a roughly chronological approach to reveal Luther the man are those of Mark U. Edwards, Jr., and H. G. Haile.<sup>16</sup> These writers use the tools of sound scholarship to depict the older Luther as a whole man whose actions and personality shaped and were shaped by the events of his life. It is important to note that both of these works suggest that Luther continued to adapt to new situations well into his fifties. Neither Edwards nor Haile found a Luther whose development stopped at adolescence, as the "psychobiographers" did.

Edwards and Haile each organizes his treatment of Luther's later life (after 1530 for Edwards, after 1533 for Haile) thematically, with the themes selected so as to follow each other chronologically.

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Edwards states that he has no particular agenda for his book aside from providing a better understanding of Luther in his time. While he thus eschews any discussion of the transcendent aspects of Luther's life, his careful treatments of Luther's response to such developments as illness, political resistance, and secular authority still illustrate the transcendent aspect in Luther. The nature of Luther the man is Edwards' main topic, however, and his depiction of a Luther whose actions (even those at which the modern reader may blanch) were logical given the situation is a strong challenge to the viewpoint of Erikson and Osborne. Edwards posits that the violent language of Luther's latter years, while not new and not exclusive to Luther, was partly due to two things: Luther's disappointment with the course of the Reformation and his belief that he had been misunderstood.

On those latter points Haile's equally able treatment of the topic differs. Referring to Luther as a "grand personality," Haile shares Edwards' view of a productive, vibrant, and intellectually capable older Luther, but fails to find the disappointment and feelings of misunderstanding that Edwards does.<sup>17</sup> Haile instead finds an older Luther who cherishes life, a man who jokes and drinks with his friends, loves his wife and children, and takes joy in simple pleasures. Haile's book discusses in a matter-of-fact way Luther's belief that the devil was an active participant in the world (the normative belief of Luther's time) without giving this issue the stress that Edwards' book does. Thus, the two differ on some details, but not on the key issue; in the view of both scholars, Luther was a well-adjusted, whole man.

A third book that concentrates on Luther's psyche is that of Heiko Oberman, but his work is something else altogether.<sup>18</sup> Idiosyncratically organized, it is a collection of detailed thoughts about Luther and not a biography. If one wishes for a book that allows the devil a large place in Luther's life, Oberman's is the work of choice. Oberman maintains that Luther lived his entire life standing between God and the devil (and, more plausibly, between the medieval era and the Enlightenment). These two adversaries even battled over interpreting Luther's life. Oberman seems unsure of whether Luther was a reformer, perhaps because of his belief in an

apocalyptic Luther.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Oberman's statements that Luther's views came from life make the book's brief treatment of that life curious. The crippling difficulty in Oberman's work, however, lies in his view that the devil was a figure of overwhelming strength to Martin Luther. Why would a Luther who believed that his efforts were doomed to fail have devoted such effort to fighting for renewal? Why would Luther, who believed the devil incapable of killing him, think the devil capable of killing the Reformation?<sup>20</sup> Some of the book's passages, notably those discussing baptism, are helpful; but, in any case, Oberman's effort does not belong in a list of biographies of Martin Luther.

Not surprisingly, the largest number of biographies of Luther come out of the Lutheran tradition. Martin Brecht, James M. Kittelson, Bernhard Lohse, and Walther von Loewenich are four Lutheran scholars, all German save Kittelson, whose recent treatments of the reformer most clearly descend from the traditional Lutheran perspective. Each of these men, however, extends this perspective in his own way.

Martin Brecht's titanic three-volume treatment addresses nearly every aspect of Luther's life in copious and sometimes almost overwhelming detail.<sup>21</sup> It will likely remain the definitive scholarly treatment of Luther's entire life for the next fifty years, and deserves to do so. Brecht's work also addresses nearly every scholarly conflict surrounding Luther's life. A short but effective critique of the Marxist view that Luther's social background determined the course of his life opens *Road to Reformation*. It states that Luther's vocation as a monk, his work as a professor, and his theology had far more impact on his life than did his ancestry.<sup>22</sup> The book also includes a masterful refutation of Erikson's theory that a dysfunctional early home life profoundly affected Luther's theology. Luther's parents were decent people, his home life was normal for the time, and Luther's relationship with his mother and father had no demonstrable effects beyond the ordinary on his relationship to God, according to Brecht.<sup>23</sup>

A pivotal thesis that moves Brecht's work beyond the earlier Lutheran tradition is that Luther's personality is essential to understanding his theology. This fact is evident even in Luther's

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early university years, says Brecht: "Luther's personality, his cause, and his manner of presenting it united in a sort of charisma which hardly a single one of his hearers was able to evade."<sup>24</sup> This union of personal identity, theology, and faith extended to his reform program as well and, while some criticized Luther for not compromising on this program, such a compromise was not possible: "... this accusation overlooks the normative character of the conception Luther had been developing ever since the indulgence controversy and the argument over the question of the pope, one which he could have abandoned only at the expense of surrendering his identity as a theologian and a Christian."<sup>25</sup> Luther's theological views and reform ideas had emerged from his involvement in life, and they in turn became an integral part of his life and identity.

It is with this thesis that Brecht—as well as Kittelson and Edwards—supplies a firm refutation of those who would charge Luther with "inconsistency" for slight changes in his views from one time to another. Luther's words, actions, and identity came out of a life of constant adaptation to new and complex situations. Only the smallest of minds could have or would have concerned themselves with minor "inconsistencies" while living a life such as Luther's. Luther himself frequently noted that he was inconsistent in small things. Yet his willingness and ability to adapt the principles of the gospel to different situations shows the transcendent nature of his life and an astonishing consistency regarding those things which he regarded as being of ultimate significance. Unlike such earlier Luther biographers as Roland Bainton, these modern authors depict Luther's personality, actions, and thought as a whole, rather than attempting to divide the man; and they posit no changes in the essential nature of Luther as he aged.<sup>26</sup>

Brecht writes of a Luther who lived life in a practical, earthy way. His book shows a man who experienced life's joys and sorrows and offered practical counsel out of that experience. Luther's own *Anfechtungen* during his monastic years allowed him to appreciate the trials of others, and advice such as he gave to his melancholy friend Waller (avoid loneliness, play, and drink heavily) shows that empathy, according to Brecht.<sup>27</sup> Clearly this Luther is not an ivory-tower theologian or a stainless saint.

Nor is Luther anything other than human in James M. Kittelson's writing. His biography, written for non-specialists by a scholar using the tools of his trade, is a compact, densely-packed look at the whole life of the reformer. It is especially clear regarding Luther's theology: "The gospel and its defense meant everything to Luther."<sup>28</sup> While Kittelson does not devote as much space to exploring Luther's emotional makeup as do Todd and Haile, he carefully notes that Luther's classmates did not recall Luther as being unusual and that the mutual respect and love found in the marriage of Martin and Katie was exceptional for the time.<sup>29</sup>

Kittelson gives special attention to Luther's relationship with the magistrates and his work building the evangelical church. He places the irreconcilable break with Rome earlier than does Todd, suggesting that Roman Catholic unwillingness to consider the evangelical message ended any possibility of reconciliation by the time of the Diet of Augsburg Diet (1530). The book meets Kittelson's own stated objective of treating Luther's accessible personality in conjunction with his transcendent public career, and it does so without being unmanageably long. It is an ideal introduction to Luther.

Walther von Loewenich's biography provides one last illustration of the comprehensive nature of the modern works being considered here.<sup>30</sup> Written primarily for theologians, it also includes a well-rounded portrayal of Luther's personality. As does Brecht, von Loewenich notes Luther's pastoral nature: "An entire chapter could be written about Luther as a pastor. His entire career had a pastoral character . . . The secret of Luther's proficiency in pastoral care was that he himself had known what it was like to experience attacks of despair (*Anfechtung*)."<sup>31</sup> Note is also taken of the earthy, practical nature of Luther's care: "Luther began his conversations with those who were ill by addressing them in purely human terms. Only later did he attempt to give them spiritual comfort."<sup>32</sup>

Von Loewenich's tone is more distinctly religious than the other scholars considered here, even the Lutherans. He appeals, for example, to his audience to carry on Luther's prophetic work, stating that Luther has a message for the church and the world today. Yet Luther's less palatable side receives mention even in this Lutheran

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ecclesiastical history. Von Loewenich does not ignore Luther's writing against the Jews, and he soundly condemns it: "Certainly it was on theological grounds that Luther began to oppose the Jews, but these grounds were not sound. It is a deplorable blot on his life that he used these grounds to disseminate such vulgar propaganda against the Jews, and that he did it with such vehemence."<sup>33</sup> In another departure from the traditional stance of Lutheran writers, von Loewenich has kind words for the medieval church. He notes that, along with some questionable manifestations of piety, there were noteworthy efforts at education and an intensity of religious belief which pervaded all of society; and he credits the work of Roman Catholic scholars in exploring these matters.<sup>34</sup>

Although outside the terms of this essay, Bernhard Lohse's recent work on Luther deserves special mention.<sup>35</sup> It is a kind of encyclopedia of Luther, organized with Germanic thoroughness. These are sample entries: "3.4. Were the Ninety-Five Theses Really Posted on the Church Door?" "5.9.6. Luther Has No Theory of the Inevitable Decline of Civilization." The book includes a survey of scholarly opinions regarding almost every conceivable aspect of Luther studies as well as a topically organized treatment of Luther's life, actions, and writings, including brief surveys of the available editions of those writings. Difficult to read as a narrative because of its format, it is nonetheless a useful reference regarding specific topics and a handy guide to further reading. Even in, moreover, this encyclopedic format, Lohse still believed Luther's personality worthy of inclusion, a sharp contrast with Paul Althaus' similar works of roughly three decades ago. Thus, Lohse provides yet another example of the increased interest in the man in studies of Luther.<sup>36</sup>

These biographies suggest four conclusions. In the first place, contemporary scholars, at least those at the highest strata of the profession, have come to recognize the importance of understanding Luther's personality to a sound interpretation of his life and impact. Luther's personal identity is not the paramount concern of all these scholars, but even works with their primary emphasis on specific aspects of Luther's career (Brecht on his theology and Edwards on his polemical writing, for example) devote significant space to his personality. Also, regardless of perspective, these authors are

unafraid of asking difficult questions about Luther. Like a family that truly loves and respects its members, they refuse to accept uncritically the actions and words of the one to whose study they devote so much time.

Secondly, these scholars show a reluctance to use Luther to foist a contemporary agenda upon the reader. Their perspectives are frequently visible (especially in Brendler and von Loewenich), but phrases such as "just as in the present day" are thankfully absent. Disagreements remain, and undoubtedly present-day struggles lurk beneath the surface of the narratives, but there are few explicit editorial comments. They appear to believe that the transcendent aspects of the reformer's life will be apparent so long as they retell his life with care, attempting to discern the meaning of Luther's words and actions for his own time.

Thirdly, the words of these writers suggest a general willingness to appreciate scholarship of high quality regardless of perspective. This trend is most explicitly apparent in Todd's appreciation of Lutheran scholarship and in von Loewenich's commendation of Roman Catholic studies. It also appears more subtly in such areas as the various treatments of the Peasants' War.

A shared interest in illuminating Luther's personality, a reluctance to argue present-day agendas through Luther studies, and an appreciation of the work of those who approach the reformer via other routes—do these three trends imply that current studies of Luther form a flavorless mass of nearly identical non-opinions? The answer to this question is an emphatic "no" which points toward a fourth conclusion—namely, that ecumenical tendencies, at least in studies of Luther, have not led scholars to a least common denominator of non-controversial but shallow writing. On the contrary, the new willingness to appreciate and utilize the best in the work of others and the belief that Luther's transcendence can speak for itself have brought a wealth of useful biographies to the student of Luther. There are differences among them. Even the most casual reader can readily observe that Kittelson and Oberman disagree on whether Luther was a reformer and that Brecht and Todd differ regarding the time beyond which reconciliation with Rome was impossible for Luther. Looking a bit more deeply, one realizes that Haile and

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Edwards hold dissimilar views regarding Luther's degree of satisfaction with the state of the evangelical church and that von Loewenich and Brendler are quite disagreed on the authority of the Bible. A complete listing of variations such as these would be well beyond the endurance of even the most interested reader. Four examples are sufficient, however, to show that these recent interpretations of Luther's life differ, just as their predecessors did.

But there is a difference in their divergencies, however, and in this difference lies the contribution of contemporary scholars to historiography. Their willingness to look beyond partisan differences and their interest in exploring Luther's personality have brought a new vigor to their portraits of the reformer. Luther is no longer two-dimensional (whatever those dimensions may have been). In the depth of his rediscovered humanity we can more easily see why this friar held so much of Europe's attention for thirty years and why his personality had such an affect on those with whom he had contact. It was not simply his ideas, as many have said, nor was it a mere coincidence of circumstances. It was a Luther possessed of a rare union of thought and personality and the way in which he acted in response to his times that reshaped his world and made him a man for all time. The best of these works—especially Todd's, Brecht's, Kittelson's, and von Loewenich's—makes this combination especially clear, but all show some recognition of it. These biographies still differ in their interpretations, but they are now converging on the same remarkable man.

Walther von Loewenich concluded the essay that opens his book with the following paragraph:

Indeed, Luther was not a book that could be read easily; he was a human being with his contradictions. It is no wonder that he is so controversial. To see Luther from only one perspective is to do him an injustice. The concern to achieve an objective judgment must not decrease, but those who only observe Luther from a cool distance will never be able to grasp the richness of his being. No matter how we approach him, many puzzles will remain. How could it be otherwise? Life cannot be captured in stereotypes. The person of Luther belongs to history, but whoever approaches

him is touched by life.<sup>37</sup>

This paragraph may serve equally well as the conclusion to this essay.

### Endnotes

1. Martin Luther, *A Sincere Admonition by Martin Luther to all Christians to Guard against Insurrection and Rebellion*, *Luther's Works, American Edition*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, tr. W. A. Lambert, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 45, pp. 70-71.
2. James M. Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), p. 16.
3. The rough historiographical sketch of earlier works that follows is not comprehensive. Luther's enormous impact has meant that almost every strain of Western thought has claimed itself to be either the heir of the "true" Luther or a complete repudiation of Luther. These innumerable variants include the Enlightenment Luther, the Pietist Luther, the Mystic Luther, and many others. Four more complete essays on the topic are in Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin: God's Court Jester* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, tr. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); and Mark U. Edwards, Jr., in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. Steven Ozment (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982).
4. William M. McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1941).
5. Hartmann Grisar, *Luther: His Life and Work*, tr. E. M. Lammond (St. Louis: Herder and Company, 1930).
6. Dieter Forte, *Martin Luther und Thomas Müntzer oder Die Einführung der Buchhaltung* (Berlin, 1971).
7. Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: Norton, 1962), and John Osborne, *Luther* (New York: New American Library, 1963).

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8. Gerhard Brendler, *Martin Luther: Theology and Revolution*, tr. Claude A. Foster, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
  9. Ibid., especially p. 372.
  10. Ibid., chapter 2, pp. 53ff. and p. 74.
  11. Ibid., p. 372.
  12. John M. Todd, *Luther: A Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982). It should be noted that Joseph Lortz' work during the 1960's was an early and important Roman Catholic scholarly analysis of Luther. Lortz did not completely exculpate Luther, suggesting that Luther saw only one side of the medieval church, but he did allow Luther some legitimacy. See Lortz, "The Basic Elements of Luther's Intellectual Style," *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther*, ed. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970).
  13. Todd, p. 373.
  14. Ibid., p. 275.
  15. Ibid., pp. 372-373.
  16. Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), and H. G. Haile, *Luther: An Experiment in Biography* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1980).
  17. Haile, p. 3.
  18. Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*, tr. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
  19. Ibid, especially pp. 151, 12, and 79.
  20. Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, ed. Theodore Tappert, in *Luther's Works: American Edition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), 54, p. 23.

21. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521*, tr. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation, 1521-1532* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); and *Martin Luther: Die Erhaltung der Kirche, 1532-1546* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1987).
22. Brecht, *Road to Reformation*, p. 6.
23. Ibid., pp. 7ff.
24. Ibid., p. 296.
25. Ibid., p. 469.
26. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon Publishing House, 1950).
27. Brecht, *Shaping and Defining*, p. 379.
28. Ibid., p. 272.
29. Ibid., p. 46, p. 282.
30. Walther von Loewenich, *Martin Luther: The Man and His Work*, tr. Lawrence W. Denef (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986).
31. Ibid., pp. 358-359.
32. Ibid., p. 358.
33. Ibid., p. 352.
34. Ibid., p. 25.
35. Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, tr. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).
36. Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), and *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 1972. Interestingly, Althaus and Lohse were both translated into English by the same man.
37. Walther von Loewenich, p. 20.

## Book Reviews

THE BOOK OF GENESIS: CHAPTERS 1-17. By Victor P. Hamilton. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.

Originally planned as a commentary on the entire book of Genesis, this volume represents the first installment of what is now projected to be a two-volume work. The reason for the change is obvious as soon as one begins to read the work: Hamilton has done a thorough job of surveying modern scholarship on the Book of Genesis. His commentary skillfully draws upon the disciplines involved in the study of the ancient Near East—Northwest Semitic languages (especially Ugaritic), Assyriology, Sumerology, Egyptology—which have had such an impact on our understanding of the cultural and linguistic milieu of the book of Genesis. It will simply take another volume to complete the task. The reader should expect a number of discussions of the relationship between Genesis and pagan mythology and between history as recorded in Genesis and as reconstructed by historians working with the discoveries of the past two centuries. Despite this wealth of research, Hamilton has written his commentary for the pastor who is not an expert in Near Eastern studies.

Hamilton defends the unity of Genesis against the documentary hypothesis not merely in the introduction, but throughout the commentary. This tack provides a defense of the unity of Genesis which is not merely a conservative "knee-jerk" reaction, but a rather well-reasoned, scholarly, Christian position. However, Hamilton side-steps the issue of the authorship of the Pentateuch; he defends the authorial unity of Genesis, but not its Mosaic authorship.

Hamilton also includes a section in the treatment of each pericope entitled "The New Testament Appropriation," where he deals with the use of the pericope in the New Testament. His discussions here are generally well done, except in the case of the important messianic passages in this book (Genesis 3:14-19 and the promises to the patriarchs). He leaves the reader with the impression that these passages were not originally messianic but "became messianic" through Christian appropriation of them.

The commentary's translation of Genesis generally tries to preserve the word order of the Hebrew when it is important for the discussion of literary features. However, several times the translation follows the Hebrew word order for no apparent reason, and at least once it does not preserve the Hebrew word order even though it is important (i.e., in Genesis 9:6, p. 311). Despite these problems, this commentary is recommended for the pastor who wishes to have an up-to-date (but not overly technical) resource which introduces him to current scholarly discussion

of the Book of Genesis.

Andrew E. Steinmann  
Cleveland, Ohio

**THE LORD IS SAVIOR: FAITH IN NATIONAL CRISIS: A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ISAIAH 1-39.** By S. H. Widyapranawa. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.

This third and final volume on Isaiah in the International Theological Commentary is the first one in the series written by an author from the Far East. S. H. Widyapranawa is a professor at Duta Wacana United Theological College, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Like George A. F. Knight's earlier commentaries on Isaiah 40-55 and 56-66, Widyapranawa also presupposes the standard critical theory of "three Isaiahs." The portions of chapters 1-39 which are usually ascribed to later redactors are duly noted, as are other well-accepted critical views of the text. The commentary contains no introduction to the Book of Isaiah, but immediately plunges into the work of commenting on the text. Technical matters are kept to a minimum, and there is no attempt to offer new insights into the text; inventiveness is not the aim of this volume or of the series as a whole. Rather, the goal here is to give a simple explanation of what the text said to its ancient audience and draw from that exegesis theological insight for the modern world.

The theology of this commentary is what Lutheran readers are likely to notice first. Widyapranawa presents well Isaiah's preaching of the law, especially the second use of the law. It is sharp and focused so that one feels the prophet's preaching personally. The treatment of the gospel in Isaiah 1-39 is by no means as focused. There is scant comfort in the way in which Widyapranawa applies the promises of God in Isaiah's message. They are often turned into a social message on such issues as nuclear arms, the environment, social justice, and the relationship of the developed countries to the Third World. This gospel is a temporal salvation brought about by God through the church rather than the eternal salvation won by Christ (which is mentioned only in passing on a few occasions). It is no surprise, then that Widyapranawa treats messianic passages as being about Christ only by virtue of their "appropriation" by the New Testament. Some passages are regarded as messianic only in the sense that they speak of an "ideal king and kingdom" in general. The reader is left to wonder whether Isaiah meant these to be fulfilled by an actual messiah, or

whether he was merely pointing to a theoretical ideal toward which the church should strive. While Widyapranawa's textual comments show a good grasp of many of the issues facing those who wish to understand Isaiah 1-39, confessional Lutherans will not find this commentary particularly useful.

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Cleveland, Ohio

A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF AMERICA. New Revised Edition. By Edwin Scott Gaustad. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1990.

To interpret the impact of religion on the entire history of the United States in four hundred pages is an impossible task; Gaustad does not attempt it. Instead he has chosen to tell the unique story of this portion of the North American continent in terms of the overarching question of religious pluralism. The author's primary argument is that religious diversity is not merely a curiosity that accompanies religion in America; it is the primary factor in the success of religion in this country. Two emphases proceed from this basic outlook. First, doctrinal issues are downplayed and discussed most often in relation to denominational schism. Secondly, through the use of this approach Gaustad tends to emphasize those religious movements which differ from what Gaustad calls "mainstream Protestantism" (not surprisingly, the author has previously produced a work entitled *Dissent in American Religion* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973]). As a result, Gaustad explains American religious history anachronistically, giving proportionally more attention to certain dissenting groups in the early history of the country than their numbers warrant. This approach becomes problematic when other important traditions are given insufficient attention. For example, the German Reformed Church receives only one citation in the entire book, even though in the early 1790's it boasted about 40,000 adherents, 13,000 communicants, and 178 congregations in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and beyond the Alleghenies. In contrast, at the same time adherents to Judaism numbered 1200 from Maine to Georgia with synagogues in only five cities. Yet this group is constantly highlighted.

More problematic for readers of this journal is the lack of attention afforded the Lutheran Church. Gaustad puts Lutheranism under the general heading of "mainstream Protestantism" with little discussion of its distinctive history, characteristics, and impact on the religious life of the

American church. The one Lutheran figure who does receive specific attention is Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. The author favorably reviews the work of Muhlenberg because "he served not only Lutherans alone" (p. 92). However, he does not develop fully Muhlenberg's ecumenical intentions. Muhlenberg was committed to the state church tradition of his native Germany and supported only those traditions which enjoyed a like background. Simultaneously he vigorously opposed the dissenting traditions present in America, such as the Methodists, Baptists, and particularly the Moravians, and strove unceasingly to overcome the influence of these schismatic bodies. Only over the course of time did he come to acclimate and resign himself to the pluralistic setting of the United States. By treating Muhlenberg in such a cursory manner, the author has missed the opportunity to use Muhlenberg as a paradigm for his thesis of the success of pluralism in America. Even more unfortunate in this regard is Gaustad's failure to include material for further study on Lutheranism—though a biography of Muhlenberg which is little more than a decade old is still in print (Leonard R. Riforgiato, *Missionary of Moderation: Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and the Lutheran Church in English America* [Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1980]).

Nevertheless, Gaustad's constant stress that religion is something that cannot be overlooked when interpreting the history of the United States is refreshing in an age when many purely secular histories seek to avoid it. Thus, despite the shortcomings in regard to Lutheranism, Gaustad's book is a valuable contribution to the history of religion in America. The work is superbly written and enjoyable to read. As a general religious history, it provides a sound and comprehensive overview of the role of religion as an integral contributor to American thought and life by offering the reader a thorough introduction to the subject which will ground him well in the subject. Gaustad also offers bibliographies at the end of each section of the book which incorporate most of the important contemporary works available for further studies. Finally, for the Lutheran pastor, who daily faces the challenge of American pluralism, this book will root his thought historically in our country's diverse religious past and thus offer him a sufficient basis on which to respond when confronted by people of other religious expressions.

Lawrence R. Rast  
Nashville, Tennessee

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CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY, 1792-1875: REVIVALIST AND REFORMER. By Keith J. Hardman. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.

The spirit of revivalistic Christianity is embodied in the person of Charles Finney, a spirit which is very much alive and active more than a hundred years after his death. This work, which is the first critical biography of Finney since 1891, is an important work for the American church. It studies the man most responsible for the movement of American Christianity away from puritanistic Calvinism towards Arminianism and its characteristic stress on the free will. Hardman asserts that Finney's emphasis on man's ability to choose salvation developed out of his legal background through the influence of Sir William Blackstone's discussions of crime and guilt. Finney denied original sin and stated that man was not a sinner from birth but by choice. He argued that since God endows each person with free moral agency, conversion does not consist in the creation of a new heart by God, but rather consists in a change in the moral preferences of the mind. To achieve this end Finney developed his "new measures," psychological devices that helped the sinner make his decision for God. These included denunciatory sermons that emphasized the wrath of God and the punishments of hell (with little mention of God's love for men in Christ), protracted public meetings, private prayer meetings, and the anxious bench, the enduring symbol of his work. Finney found that the number of converts was higher when he required some action on the part of the people. And so he required those sinners who desired conversion to make the public act of coming forward to the anxious bench where they would receive prayer and personal ministrations.

While Hardman concedes that the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York, where Finney first rose to prominence, offered a field ripe to harvest for the revivalist's techniques, the enormous success of Finney outside of this geographical region necessitates a more comprehensive explanation. Hardman offers three. First, Finney was determined to democratize American Protestantism, and the fact that his early career paralleled Andrew Jackson's similar political attempts cannot be ignored. Secondly, Finney's optimistic approach was in harmony with the post-millennialism of the day; Finney and American Protestantism looked forward to ushering in the golden age of the church. Finally, Finney and his observably successful methods opened an avenue of influence upon Old School Calvinistic pastors who felt constrained by rigid double-predestination and to whom "evangelism was more important than

theological position" (p. 153). However, Hardman has ignored an important theological reason for Finney's success. Finney, with his emphasis on the law and the decision of man, appealed directly to the *opinio legis*; it is the normal course of man to try to save himself. Not surprisingly, Finney was especially deficient theologically in his proclamation of the vicarious satisfaction, stressing instead the moral influence theory of the work of Christ. Furthermore, Finney was entirely a-historical; he simply had no appreciation of ecclesiology and the history of the church.

This book is a good recounting of Finney's life and work, particularly in its use of previously unpublished primary sources. It is well-structured and well-written, has a fine bibliography, and is interspersed with illustrations that make the figures of the text more personal. The major failing of the work is its lack of a thorough treatment of Finney's theology. Nevertheless, it offers the reader a means to come to grips with the major popularizer of the Arminianism so evident in American Christianity today.

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Nashville, Tennessee

**CHEATING: MAINTAINING YOUR INTEGRITY IN A DISHONEST WORLD.** By Barbara Mary Johnson. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1990.

Barbara M. Johnson, who teaches journalism at California State University, has written an excellent little book on cheating. Much of the material contained in the book is based on questionnaires which Johnson circulated among a representative sample of people. Her research shows that cheating, deceit, and dishonesty are pervasive problems in our society. Indeed, the book cites a statistic which indicates that American adults tell an average of thirteen "little white lies" weekly. Johnson finds that our culture is a "cheating" culture. Her study shows cheating to be rampant in personal relationships, in schools and colleges, in government, in business, and in a host of other areas.

In seven chapters Johnson probes the many aspects of dishonesty and cheating. She writes from a Christian viewpoint. While her denominational affiliation is not mentioned, her understanding of the gospel, which she introduces at many points, seems to be a Lutheran understanding. The gospel of Christ is shown to be the place where one can find forgiveness and, yes, set off in quest of a more honest lifestyle.

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*Cheating* is well-written and interesting. It should be so, since its author is a teacher of journalism. The reviewer had few major theological concerns. While at some points Johnson speaks of being guided by the Holy Spirit, she seems basically to understand that such guidance comes through the word. In chapter five the book seems to run the risk of taking the position of "situational ethics" with respect to certain ethically "grey" areas. At the same time, Johnson seems to affirm the continuing normative role of the Ten Commandments in ethical decision-making. With the above-mentioned cautions in mind, readers will find Johnson's book worthwhile. It could provide some ideas for a sermon. The discussion questions, at the end of each chapter, would make the book ideal for use in adult or high school Bible study groups.

Gary C. Genzen  
Lorain, Ohio

JOB 1-20 WORD BIBLICAL COMMENTARY. By David J. A. Clines. Dallas: Word Books, 1989.

The reviewer is tempted to use the cliché that this commentary is both "good news" and "bad news," and he shall try to summarize and evaluate the "good news" first. Of course, final judgments will have to wait until the second volume on chapters 21-42 appears, but the general direction seems clear enough already here. In his preface Clines remarks that "more than one large-scale commentary on Job has not progressed beyond the first volume; I hope not to disappoint readers . . ." Many will share that sentiment.

Clines is Professor of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield (England). He has already published widely. The reviewer shall risk singling out *The Theme of the Pentateuch* as perhaps best typifying the approach employed also here on Job. Clines is a prominent representative of a laudably wholistic trend in much recent biblical exegesis that is relatively uninterested in questions of origins, sources, and development of biblical books. This reviewer fingered especially his work on the Pentateuch above, because obviously marginalization (if not denial) of the "documentary hypothesis" has repercussions all across the board in Old Testament studies.

Job is not nearly so pivotal a book as the Pentateuch, but one finds a similar mentality here. Clines must spend a little time addressing issues of origin (especially pp. lvi ff.), but here we find, not only remarkably little interest in the subject, but a great reluctance to concede different

authorship to the book's prose (prologue and epilogue), to the speeches of Elihu (chapters 32-37), and to the poem on wisdom (chapter 28)—to mention only major examples. Lesser examples are confronted as they occur throughout commentary on the book. One typical example may be cited (on the originality of the second cycle of testing in chapter 2): ". . . the whole discussion perhaps only reflects the tendency in Old Testament scholarship to project horizontal or synchronic tensions within a narrative onto a vertical, diachronic, developmental grid (which is generally hypothetical)" (p. 41). Similarly, on text-critical issues (in which Job abounds), a few contrary possibilities are entertained, but generally there is extreme reluctance to second-guess the Masoretic Text.

For the foreseeable future, Clines' commentary will probably be *the* standard reference work on Job in the English language (at least when the second volume appears). This probability is due partly, no doubt, to Clines' competence, but it must also be attributed to the extreme thoroughness with which he has approached his task. His introductory orientation to books about Job "treats" us to some *fifty* pages of bibliography, ranging from patristic and early Jewish works down to modern times. More specialized bibliographies introduce the commentary on every chapter or major section of the book. Even a quick scan will show that Clines has not simply compiled titles, but has perused and sometimes interacted with the books listed. He calculates that, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries alone, Christian books on Job appeared on an average of one every eighteen months!

Furthermore, he informs us that he has regularly compared the renderings of some *fifteen* English versions on every line—a discipline which he declares to have been "a most constructive process for me as a Hebraist and critic, leading sometimes, admittedly, to a state of palsied indecision but more often to a sharpened perception of the text" (p. xi). (Would that we could posit even remotely that much research by most "students of Scripture"—on whatever level, never mind confrontation with the original languages!)

Now to the "bad news." The point should not be overstated, but, on the whole, the commentary is *theologically* rather light-weight. One could almost say, to use the now common phrase about ultimate ethical issues, that the book is almost studiously "value-free." (It is not, of course, that we do not have a plethora of commentaries at the opposite end of the spectrum.) "Wisdom literature," where Clines classifies Job with most scholars, does pose unique problems if read as "Scripture," of course, not

to speak of the perennial and protean "problem of evil" (or, more specifically, the suffering of the *righteous*) which the book confronts. It is not that Clines hesitates to make judgments on a host of individual issues and agree or disagree with other scholars, but on the "big" issues, this reader, at least, felt short-changed.

Most of us have long since been disabused of the hope that the "Word Biblical Commentary" series would exhibit the conservative, "evangelical" orientation originally promised. Many of us are also aware of the current popularity of "reader-oriented criticism," which accents in varying degrees the truisms (up to a point) that "all readers of biblical texts, as of any other texts, bring their own interests, prejudices, and presuppositions with them" and that it is neither desirable nor possible to "hide or abandon one's values without doing violence to one's own integrity" (p. xlvii). Nevertheless, it is just slightly disconcerting to meet essays on possible "feminist," "vegetarian," and "materialist" readings of the book, followed by a final option of "a Christian reading." If the object (the text and authorial intention) has not been totally eclipsed by the subject (the reader), questions of ultimate truth must be confronted in a far more searching and definitive way than we find here. (The reviewer would venture the further judgment that this weakness represents the Achilles heel of much current "literacy criticism," in contrast to classical historical-critical readings, historicistic or otherwise wrong-headed as they tended to be.)

In the Book of Job, such issues and many others almost inevitably come to a head in the "celebrated and much debated" (p. 457) 19:25-27 (the passage referring to Job's *go'el* or "redeemer"—although Clines prefers the rendering "champion"). Granted that this is probably the only passage in the Book of Job of many people even know anything at all, that many Christians routinely treat it ahistorically as though it were uttered by St. Paul, and that even within the context of the Old Testament alone (and, even more so, of Job alone) any rendering of *go'el* as "redeemer" must be very carefully nuanced. Job 19 is by no means the only time in the book that such ideas appear. Although Eliphaz in 5:1 peremptorily dismisses the idea that any *qedoshim* ("holy ones," probably "angels") in heaven would answer him, already in 9:33 Job apparently allows himself at least the fleeting wish that there were a *mokiach* ("umpire," etc.) to be found above. And the idea appears to grow on him as the dialogues continue. Chapter 14 clearly considers the possibility of a solution beyond the grave, and by 16:18-22 Job seems certain that he has an "witness" above, a clear precursor of 19:25-27. And Elihu in

33:23 does at least seem to hold the possibility of Job having a *melits* ("mediator," etc.) in heaven who might elicit repentance.

Interpretations have usually oscillated between that of Job appealing "to God against God" (implausible as Old Testament exegesis, although not without christological possibilities) and some idea of a "personal god" (known in Babylonian polytheism), "defense attorney" (as a counterpart to "the satan"), or the like. Modern defenders of something approaching the second or more traditional view are by no means lacking, not only, unsurprisingly, among "evangelicals" (e.g., Archer, Hartley, Young) but also often elsewhere (Andersen, Dahood, Habel, Janzen, Pope, Terrien). In contrast, Clines resolutely argues that Job thinks of nothing more than his own *words*, his protestations of innocence which shall "stand" or "live" even after he himself is dead. Job "objectifies" this "into an entity that has something of an existence of its own and now dwells in the heavenly realm where there is a better chance of encounter with God" (p. 460). One must, allegedly, carefully distinguish "between what Job *knows* or believes and what he *desires*" (p. 457 and *passim*).

A full airing of the issue would require far more space than is available here. It is impossible to escape the suspicion that Clines' viewpoint is ultimately determined more than a little by the virtual dogma of modern academic scholarship that Israel had virtually no thoughts of life after death other than the "half-life" or virtual extinction of Sheol. Many of Job's own words can be cited to that effect (3:17-19 and all of chapter 14)—but, then again, Christians have never had any trouble speaking in the same breath about the finality and irreversibility of death and about literal life after death, depending on the context. The reviewer finds Clines' exegesis here not only unlikely from the standpoint of Hebrew word-usage (although the "*words*" of the *goel* are surely part of it), but also impossible even as "*a Christian reading.*" And unfortunately, this parade example appears to be more typical of the commentary as a whole than any theologically-oriented exegete would desire.

Horace D. Hummel  
St. Louis, Missouri

PATTERNS IN HISTORY: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORICAL THOUGHT. By David Bebbington. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.

History repeats itself (or at least gets reprinted). A reprint, especially of a book from a previous decade, is worth noting, reviewing, and

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reading. David Bebbington's respected presentation of historiography in general as well as his Christian critique of several schools of history calls for high commendations to Baker Book House. Bebbington, a British evangelical historian, describes five schools of historiography with short, critical analyses of each. Appreciably written from an admitted and unabashed Christian perspective, the work represents a depth of scholarly research with a clarity of critical analysis which serve as a model among Christian scholars.

Especially worthwhile are his first (overview), third (Christian history), and final chapters (philosophy and meaning of history). Clearly and rather concisely, Bebbington describes the task and necessary limits of historiography (chapter 1) in a way that is readily understandable for non-specialists in history, both lay and clergy. Chapter three surveys the uniqueness of the Christian (actually, Bebbington admits it is the Judaeo-Christian) linear and teleological perspective on history, which provides a foundation for evaluating later schools. In discussing Christian millennialism, Bebbington gives a very careful critique of the most common views, and discerningly concludes (p. 65):

Within Christianity itself, however, Augustine, the classical reformers and many biblical commentators have come to the opinion that there are inadequate grounds for taking the thousand years mentioned in the book of Revelation as a period of blessing before the end of time. It is a symbol, they argue with some cogency, of the history of the church.

Other chapters provide contextual dialogues with the ever recurring cyclical view of history (chapter 2), the secularized optimism evident in the progressive view of the rationalism of the Enlightenment (chapter 4), the culturally relativistic view of Germanic historicism with its nationalistic and linguistic idealism (chapter 5), and the historical materialist perspective of the Marxist worldview (chapter 6) as aids for appreciating and evaluating historical writing.

Most helpful to the theological reader are chapters seven and eight. Chapter seven deals with the philosophy of historiography (not as boring as it sounds) and concludes with the very beneficial "A Christian Philosophy of Historiography" and a discussion of the frequently neglected Lutheran historian, Johann Martin Chladenius (1710-1759). Chapter eight, "The Meaning of History," provides a definite Christian perspective and conclusion to the book, underscoring the confident hope Christians expect of history as well as the necessity of seeing all history through "the cross

of Christ." Bebbington's new "Afterward" stresses his concern with literary-philosophical Modernism, a sixth "school" of historiography, while affirming once again the Christian alternative to all secular approaches to the writing of history.

While the organization, structure, and descriptions of the various schools are good, historians may take issue with some of his examples or find his evidence insufficient or even contradictory of some of his theses, especially in his discussions of pre-Enlightenment history. For example, in his evaluation of cyclical history, he introduces non-cyclic historians into the discussion only because they are of a similar ancient period, and he fails to include adequately the Canaanite and Babylonian cyclical perspectives. In a later chapter he encourages the writing of history from a Christian perspective, yet admits that for the past two hundred years to mention God and divine providence would result in unpublishable material. Such criticisms, however, do not detract from the solid scholarship and continuing contribution of this work to modern Christian thought and even apologetics.

The format of the book is well done for a reprint. The typesetting of the book gives evidence of corrections of the edition of 1979 by InterVarsity Press. This evidence is not disturbing or disrupting and should be appreciated by those of us who are bothered by typographic errors in books. Unfortunately the booklist at the end of the work was not updated. This book should be read by all Christians interested in affirming the importance of history and in the writing of history with a Christian perspective. The evaluations of, historical backgrounds to, and critiques of post-Enlightenment historiography alone are well worth the price of the book.

Timothy Maschke  
Mequon, Wisconsin

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN AND BLUE SUEDE SHOES: CHRISTIANS AND POPULAR CULTURE. By Kenneth A. Myers. Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1989.

As the seventh volume in Crossway Books "Christian Worldview Series," *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes* examines the roots, assumptions, practices, and effect of "popular culture" especially in relationship to American Evangelicalism. Myers worries that, "if the movement known as evangelicalism promotes a culture of sentiment rather than a culture of reasoned reflection, it is not surprising that popular

culture has been as dominant (if not quite as vulgar) within evangelical circles as in the society at large" (p. 186). The subjectivity of American evangelicalism makes this form of Christianity especially prone to the enticements of "popular culture." Myers rightly argues that this culture is subversive of orthodox Christianity.

In light of the clamor for "cross-cultural ministry and missions" in our circles, Myers' book is requisite reading. Lutherans would do well to ponder Myers' analysis of "pop culture" and, in so doing, ask themselves critical questions regarding its impact on preaching, evangelism, liturgy, pastoral care, catechesis, and church art. Rather than adapting the faith to the culture, culture must be crucified and raised with Christ Jesus. Only in this way can the church "baptize" the culture. In other words, for the orthodox and apostolic faith, the *cultus* of the Divine Service creates and shapes a *culture* that is in the world, but not of the world. This reviewer read *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes* just after reading the study document of the LCMS Commission on Worship entitled "Worship Toward 2000." In the long run, Myers' book may be more helpful in understanding the cultural dynamics that influence worship than "Worship Toward 2000."

John T. Pless  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

A THEOLOGY OF A PROTESTANT CATHOLIC. By Adrian Hastings.  
London: SCM Press, 1990.

A growing number of Lutherans, both in the ELCA and the LCMS, are identifying themselves as "evangelical catholics." Now we have a Roman Catholic theologian from South Africa, teaching at a British university, calling himself a "Protestant Catholic." The proposals set forth by Hastings are certainly "Protestant" in that they protest certain teachings of the Roman Church and, in some cases, the tenets of the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church."

*The Theology of a Protestant Catholic* is not a treatise staking out a proposal for a new theological approach, although Hastings attempts to outline his presuppositions in chapter 1 as he addresses questions of "community, consensus, and truth" as marks of catholicity and as the framework for his protestations. Rather, *The Theology of a Protestant Catholic* is a collection of essays and sermons ranging from an account of religious studies at the University of Leeds to a sermon preached at the

funeral of a couple killed in a car accident. One essay argues for the ordination of women to the priesthood by dismissing apostolic directives to the contrary as "provisional." Another chapter engages liturgical adaptation in light of cultural pluralism. The theme of pluralism surfaces in a number of the essays. While Hastings attempts to avoid the extremes of John Hick, he ends up so "universalizing Christ" that the "scandal of the particularity" of the incarnation is in fact lost. The cross remains a stumbling block.

John T. Pless  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE CHURCH AND HER FELLOWSHIP, MINISTRY, AND GOVERNANCE. By Kurt E. Marquart. Volume IX in *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*. Fort Wayne, Indiana: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990.

It is perhaps trite to say that Kurt Marquart's contribution to the *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics* is most timely. Yet with *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*, Marquart brings confessional clarity to an article of faith which continues to be muddled by the relativizing ideals of tolerance, accommodation, and success-orientation engendered by what Marquart calls our "post-Constantinian" age. Far from treating ecclesiology as a matter of mere academic interest, Marquart presents a work which can be characterized as being *in statu confessionis*. Here Marquart presents himself as being nothing other than the heir of a great tradition of church-men—Francis Pieper, C. F. W. Walther, the orthodox theologians of the seventeenth century, and, of course, the confessors of the Book of Concord, all of whom sought nothing other than to be faithful to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the apostolic faith. In consequence, and making no apologies for the many overt references to the above sainted theologians of the Missouri Synod, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* proves to be far from being insular or isolationist. Marquart presents the ecclesiology not of the Missouri Synod, but the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. As he makes clear in the first of the three parts of this work, since there is but one Christ, there can be only one body of Christ. The criterion for the locus of this church is the faithfulness with which the one truth is confessed. Marquart thus explores the various positions concerning the visible and invisible (*viz.*, the hidden church), locates the church by means of the *notae* of the purely taught gospel and the administration of the sacraments in agreement with the gospel of Christ,

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and finally outlines the biblical and confessional criteria which define the parameters of church fellowship. But while this description of the content may read as being somewhat predictable, this cannot be said of Marquart's presentation of the data or his careful and trenchant use of language. He is most careful in defining his terms and chooses his words circumspectly to preclude equivocation, while his literary style (which is most refreshing to find in a doctrinal treatise) is lucid and pithy.

Perhaps shorter than it might have been, in light of the not insignificant confusion concerning the nature of the public ministry in this generation of Lutheran pastors, is part two on the ministry. Yet Marquart does go some way in providing clarification of the concept of the public ministry confessed by the Lutheran church in contrast to those of the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Calvinist traditions. He also seeks to clarify Luther's and Walther's *Übertragungslehre*, the nature of offices which are auxiliary to the *Predigtamt*, and finally the question of call and ordination, including the ordination of women (the latter being a most necessary investigation in light of the recent decision by the Church of England to ordain women to the priesthood—not because the ordination of women is something new, but because it is becoming the accepted norm).

The final section puts church governance into the christological framework already apparent in the Lutheran Confessions. Finally, the indexes of references to Scripture and the Book of Concord are most helpful, as is the bibliography provided. It might perhaps be worth mentioning that the already lengthy sheet of errata which accompanies the book falls short of having discovered all typographical errors.

In sum, Marquart provides a most instructive book on how the church is to be confessed most faithfully in our age. As one who himself teaches the Lutheran Confessions, the reviewer can only commend this work by using the words of Francis Bacon, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." This book is indeed one of the few.

Gerald S. Krispin  
Edmonton, Alberta

JOHANNINE FAITH AND LIBERATING COMMUNITY. By David Rensberger. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988.

Rensberger offers first a succinct and useful assessment of the most

recent developments in Johannine studies. Building especially then on the works of Meeks, Richter, Martyn, Brown, and Wengst, the author looks to new avenues of the interpretation of John's Gospel stimulated by the latest efforts of scholars to delineate its social and historical settings. Of particular interest to Rensberger is the gospel's first generation of readers and the range of meanings it held for them. Behind the "spiritual," he asserts, one finds the possibility of social and even political interpretations. Significant is the relation of John's Gospel to a theology of liberation and to present-day inquiries into the role of the church in the world.

The determinative factor for the Johannine community was, argues Rensberger, its conflict with the synagogue. Initially, this group of Christians functioned entirely within the fold of Judaism. Their confession of Jesus as the Messiah, however, brought them into increasing conflict with the Jewish authorities. And so, finally, they were expelled from the synagogue altogether. As a result the group turned inward upon itself, and a growing isolation and even alienation from outsiders came to characterize its self-understanding. The group became a sect, at least in relation to Judaism, if not also in relation to other Christians. Johannine Christianity became not merely a subculture, but a counterculture.

Thus, what John's Gospel calls for is, according to Rensberger, a public transfer of allegiance, an open confession in which one takes a stand with an oppressed community. Such a community has no status, no power, no place in the world. One is asked, therefore, to dislocate and displace one's self socially, "to undertake an act of deliberate downward mobility" (p. 114). It is only then that "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is only then that the possibility of the renewal of both self and society is afforded. A single transformation becomes possible which "remakes thought and action, person and society, and makes them one" (p. 152). Here is the meaning, then, of being "born from above." Here, concludes Rensberger, is Johannine Christianity.

The chief strength of Rensberger's argument lies in his recognition that John's Gospel does indeed call for a public transfer of allegiance in which one takes a stand with an oppressed community. And such a stand may well involve a deliberate social dislocation of one's self. Rensberger does, however, not sufficiently appreciate a point that he himself acknowledges. The Johannine community suffers persecution not because of its racial heritage, or because of some other socio-economic factor, but "precisely because of its christology" (p. 121). It simply does not follow, therefore,

that membership in the Johannine community would *necessarily* involve the loss of status, power, or place in the world. Both servants of Christ and enemies of Christ are to be found in all elements of society at all times. A transfer of allegiance, therefore, involves not an identification with any particular element of society but with a confession. One suffers the reproach not of such an element in society, but of every person throughout society whose enemy is the Son of God. The truth, therefore, does not, as Rensberger suggests, hold out the possibility of liberation from such persecution in this present evil age (John 19:36). To be "born from above" means, instead, that one recognizes such persecution as the requisite mark of one's participation in Christ (John 15:18-20) and the means by which one glorifies God (John 21:20). In Christ, therefore, there is in this age liberation not from the antipathy of the world, but from the weight of our sin (John 1:29).

Bruce Schuchard  
Victor, Iowa

**MADE IN AMERICA: THE SHAPING OF MODERN AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM.** By Michael Scott Horton. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

This is a book that confessional Lutherans will find both engaging and discomforting. It captivates the reader in its critical appraisal of American evangelicalism, while simultaneously offering a troublesome solution. Horton strongly criticizes evangelicalism. He finds that it has departed from the Reformation-Age faith of Luther and Calvin and has developed a system that emphasizes the feelings of individuals at the expense of the objective standards of the faith. Throughout the work Horton disparages the thought of such early evangelicals as Charles Finney, who argued: "a revival is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle in any sense. It is a purely philosophic result of the right use of means" (p. 45). Such evangelical pragmatism, according to Horton, diminishes the glory of God in the work of salvation and, though it accents the rhetoric of miracle, it actually repudiates the efficacy of the miraculous. Evangelicalism denies the objective sovereignty of God; man is its subject and center.

The solution for the problems of evangelicalism is a return to "orthodoxy"—that is, Puritan Calvinism. However, Horton's Calvinism is not high Calvinism with its emphasis on the sacraments and christology, but the Calvinism of the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Confession, the so-called "Tulip Theology." Horton seems to think that his solution, a

return to the objective means of proclaiming God's grace, namely, through the creeds and the liturgy, is a great rediscovery. In fact, Horton here betrays a lack of familiarity with other historical traditions, particularly confessional Lutheranism, which has historically stressed the need for the objective proclamation of the gospel.

Horton's historical methodology is suspect. He interprets American religious history only in terms of the experience of New England; Puritanism is the norm by which all of American religion is judged. But one must ask if this is an entirely appropriate paradigm for discussing American Christianity. What of the pluralistic religious experience of the Middle Colonies and the Anglican establishment of the South? There is more to American religion than the Puritans, and even Puritan hegemony is open to debate. Hence, while Horton effectively debunks the notion that America was once a Christian nation, we have to ask whether he is not substituting one myth for another. But here lies one of the real problems with this work. Claiming to be an historical investigation, it is really a sermon in disguise; it is a Jeremiad, a call for a return to Dortian Calvinism and its characteristic stress on total depravity, divine sovereignty, and, most importantly, a limited atonement.

The book is unfortunately marred in a number of other ways. Typographical errors appear with unwelcome frequency, and at one point it is obvious that a large part of a paragraph has been left out. Furthermore, the book does not have a bibliography. In short, this book is not a real attempt at history; it reads more like a sermon. Readers seeking a reliable critique of evangelicalism would do better to consult other works. Hence, though Horton's general critique repeats themes with which Missouri Lutherans may agree, the resolution here offered is inadequate.

Lawrence R. Rast  
Nashville, Tennessee

THE PASTOR-EVANGELIST IN THE PARISH. By Richard Stoll Armstrong. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1990.

Unlike so many books on pastoral practice, this volume is authored by one who believes that faith's existence and growth are achieved by the Holy Spirit, not through management. Richard Armstrong departs refreshingly from current trends, for he constantly asserts that virtually all pastoral work is evangelism—that is, "gospel-giving." The fashionable dichotomy between "outreach" and "maintenance" is not drawn in this book. Instead, Armstrong speaks of in-parish work as nothing more or

less than evangelism directed at those whose existing faith need the same divine word as does the unbeliever's non-faith.

Armstrong writes rather ponderously, and perhaps has tried too hard to demonstrate some things which the reader could deduce himself. He treats virtually every aspect of pastoral work in minute detail. But for the parish pastor who is ready to have his every task (when done well) be an evangelistic, kingdom-expanding effort, a wealth of insights await in this book's pages.

Andrew W. Dimit  
Duluth, Minnesota

THESE THINGS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN: STUDIES ON THE FOURTH GOSPEL. By Raymond F. Collins. Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, Volume 2. Louvain: Peeters Press; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990.

"Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs" is a publishing venture whose purpose is to offer those engaged in pastoral ministry throughout the world studies inspired by Louvain's long and distinguished tradition of theological inquiry. The volumes appearing in this series, then, are selected as examples of today's finest reflections on contemporary theology and pastoral practice. The present volume in this series comes to us from Raymond F. Collins, professor of New Testament Studies at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium) and former rector of the American College affiliated with the university. A specialist in Johannine and Pauline literature, Collins has published several significant works on the New Testament, including *Introduction to the New Testament*, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, and *Letters That Paul Did Not Write*. In this latest work Collins assembles for the first time the fruits of his reflections on the Gospel of John as these have appeared in a variety of publications over a fourteen-year span of time (1976-1989).

Mimicking the evangelist's supposed affection for expressions which bear a double meaning, Collins has chosen a title for his book which carries such a burden. First, it is meant to suggest the fashion in which his own work was assembled. Secondly, it is meant to recall the way in which the gospel itself was composed and the purpose for which it was produced. Because Collins' book is an assembly of previously unrelated essays, it is loosely organized with no real unifying theme. There is much in these collected essays, however, which suggests an overall view of the theological thrust of John's Gospel. The style of the gospel with

particular emphasis upon Johannine characterization is well illustrated. And the many facets of the gospel's notion of faith, the doctrine of the incarnation, and the new commandment of love also receive ample treatment. There is little here that could be coined "new." In spite of the fact that these things were published before, however, the opportunity to view them together provides a useful look at one man's attempt over a number of years to offer yet another word on the testimony of faith penned by John and entrusted to us.

Bruce Schuchard  
Victor, Iowa

**A SOUL UNDER SIEGE: SURVIVING CLERGY DEPRESSION.** By C. Welton Gaddy. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster-John Knox Press, 1991.

Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, formerly a college professor, seminary professor, and parish pastor has written here an autobiographical account of a clinical depression which he experienced. His book makes another contribution to the growing body of literature on "clergy-burnout". Gaddy has written a book that can be read profitably by both clergy and seminary students. Few parish pastors will fail to relate to many of the kinds of incidents which Gaddy describes. The author discusses such topics as role expectations of clergy, repressed anger, and the general stresses of the pastorate which helped to precipitate a biochemically based "clinical depression" in his life.

Most interesting are Gaddy's reports of the kind and accepting attitudes displayed by staff and fellow patients during his hospital in-patient stay. He wonders why he did not experience the same sort of accepting attitudes in the church? Although Gaddy might well take exception, he needs to remember that the church functions in the world, and not in the protective environment of a hospital mental health unit. Nevertheless, the book does give one pause to ponder the lovelessness which is sometimes demonstrated in the local church.

The book continues with some words to congregations concerning the expectations which they have of their pastors and how those expectations can lead to clergy depression and burnout. The volume concludes with some "Memos to Ministers" concerning a number of steps which pastors can take to prevent depression. The reviewer was somewhat surprised to learn that Dr. Gaddy, after describing significant depression, indicates that he received only seven days of in-patient therapy. Nevertheless, this book

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can be read with profit by clergy, church officers, and anyone interested in the growing problems of clergy depression.

Gary C. Genzen  
Lorain, Ohio

A THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS: THE DEATH OF JESUS IN THE PAULINE LETTERS. By Charles B. Cousar. Overtures to Biblical Theology, 24. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990.

Most Lutherans are very sensitive to discussion of the theology of the cross, but usually they have Martin Luther's treatment of the subject in mind. This volume builds on the important German debate of the sixties and seventies regarding Paul's theology of the cross and brings these discussions to the North America of the nineties, where it continues to have immense relevance in the face of ecclesiastical triumphalism. Cousar, who is the Samuel A. Cartledge Professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, summarizes the positions of this German-dominated debate in his introduction before he commences his own treatment of the subject, which is largely an exegetical analysis of major texts of Pauline theology.

Cousar groups his expositions thematically so that each chapter focuses on pericopes which address some facet of Jesus' death as it relates to the following: God (chapter 1); human sinfulness (chapter 2); resurrection (chapter 3); the people of God (chapter 4); and the Christian life (chapter 5). While it is at times confusing to be jumping between epistles as the exegesis progresses, Cousar is substantive in his method and engages relevant secondary literature primarily in the notes. Furthermore, it is refreshing to read an exegetical treatment that is so sensitive to allowing the rich language and metaphors of the particular text speak: "setting relationships right, reconciling alienated people, not keeping a record of trespasses of the guilty, expiating for sins, paying debts, triumphing over enemies, liberating the enslaved, etc." (p. 85). Cousar is not afraid to talk about the "cosmic" power of sin and the "apocalyptic" nature of the Christ event. Too often a favorite model for understanding the death of Jesus (i.e., Anselmic or *Christus Victor*) is selected by expositors and its language is read into every text. Many Lutheran readers are sure to be troubled with Cousar's adoption of the subjective genitive rendering of *pistis Christou* ("faith of Christ" in place of the objective genitive "faith in Christ") and his understanding of baptism in Romans 6 as symbolic.

Cousar makes two important contributions to the current discussions of

Paul's theology of the cross. First, his treatment is more synchronic than some of his German counterparts, since he departs from the redaction-criticism of Käsemann, who distinguished between pre-Pauline traditions and Paul's personal views about the death of Jesus. Cousar correctly notes that the adaptation of a tradition by an author does not make it less a part of his theological thought or convictions. For example, Paul's use of an early hymn in Philippians 2 does not make the theology presented there less characteristically Pauline. Cousar's second contribution is that he highlights the truth that Paul's theology of the cross not only is used negatively to correct dangerous teachings, but is also used positively to nurture and edify the congregations that he is addressing. Cousar's scholarly and cogent style at times fails to capture the pastoral passion of Paul regarding the cross, yet he concludes this volume with a valiant plea for the church to return to the message of the cross in her current search for identity in North America.

Charles A. Gieschen  
Traverse City, Michigan

THE SPIRIT IN JOHN. By John Wijngaards. Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament. Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988.

This attempt at a scholarly, yet non-technical, study of the Spirit in John comes to us from a Mill Hill missionary whose published works include *The Gospel of John and His Letters* and *Scripture Comes Alive*. John's Gospel, argues Wijngaards, represents an essentially faithful though daring transformation of the message of Jesus into the language of Hellenism. Referring to Raymond Brown's exposition of this transformation as the most convincing to date, Wijngaards presupposes that the gospel was written in stages and that the contributions of three separate authors can be distinguished. At the center of the gospel's portrait of the Spirit, Wijngaards suggests, is the expectation that every Christian will have a "profound experience" of the breath of God. "By it, and not by a baptismal certificate, we know that we are Christian. For God is Spirit" (p. 11).

Wijngaards divides his study into three sections. Section one groups the texts which speak of the *pneuma* into four thematic clusters, examines the use of this term against its rabbinic, Hellenic, and Christian background, and then explores the gospel's understanding of the "Spirit event" as the essential experience of an internal transformation for the Christian. Section two focuses on a fifth thematic cluster—the texts which speak of

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the Paraclete. The varied aspects of the Paraclete's role as comforter, counsel for the defense, successor to Jesus, teacher, and interpreter are examined. Section three attempts to relate the gospel's portrait of the Spirit to the efforts of the early church to define the doctrine of the Trinity.

According to Wijngaards, John's Gospel is addressed to a community seeking access to God, an immediate experience of the divine. It directs those who aspire to be liberated from a world of matter and darkness to the experience of the Spirit. Like the wind, which cannot be seen but is known by its effects, the Spirit makes its presence known. Wherever there is the Spirit, people are "seized by God, are being overwhelmed" (p. 28). As with Philo's Moses, the core of the Spirit event is this experience. He who is open to God will receive God's overwhelming gift (p. 44). He will "see" the Spirit and "know" Him because the Spirit ever "makes his presence felt in us" (p. 87).

The strength of Wijngaards' study is to be found in his discussion of the various thematic clusters present in John's Gospel. That the gospel encourages its readers to seek an "experience" of the Spirit, however, is without textual foundation. It may well be that John addresses an audience which hungers after an experience of the divine. His answer to them, however, is this: "The *pneuma* blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). John, therefore, declares not that the birth of the Spirit is the perceptible experience of an internal transformation, but that it is wholly imperceptible. The Spirit "speaks," but His activity cannot be traced. In what sense does the Spirit "speak"? The Spirit speaks the word of God (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15). The giving of the Spirit and the speaking of God's word are understood not as two separate acts but as a solitary event. The Spirit's presence, however, remains imperceptible. To be born of the Spirit, then, is not a matter of experience. That which is a matter of experience ceases to be a matter of faith. John writes not to direct his addressees to an experience of the divine, but to the testimony of Jesus that, by the power of the imperceptible Spirit, they might hear and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life in His name (John 20:31).

Bruce Schuchard  
Victor, Iowa

THE VOICE OF MY BELOVED: THE SONG OF SONGS IN WESTERN MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY. By E. Ann Matter. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

Two things that make a pastor uncomfortable are a discussion of the Middle Ages and having to make specific comments about the Song of Songs. After all, how can one be at ease discussing a thousand-year period of history after one class at the seminary? In addition, the Song of Songs tends to make us uncomfortable with its use of sexual imagery. E. Ann Matter opens the door to a look at arguably the most influential biblical book of the medieval period. Why was this book so important to medieval piety? Matter makes the case that the passionate language complemented the "christocentric spirituality of the medieval church" (p. 137). Indeed, in an illustration from Bernard (a favorite of Luther) she shows that the exegesis was aimed at providing a place of refuge for souls in the wounds of Christ (p. 138).

This book also takes up the complicated discussion of the multiple senses of Scripture in the medieval period. She concludes that the Bible was the map of divine reality hidden under shadows and figures. The way in which medieval scholars brought together many learned opinions in a "seamless exposition" required considerable skill. Exegesis of this period was not just speculative; it was seriously concerned with the care of souls.

Exegesis moved from a collective view to an emphasis on a description of the individual spiritual life. The traditional understanding of the love of Christ for His bride, the church, was reinterpreted at various times in the catechesis of the church. The early church and the medieval church grasped the importance of the Song because of the words of Christ and Paul's repetition of the theme. The reviewer came away from Matter's book seriously questioning "rationalistic" interpretations and valuing an interpretation rooted in the language of faith. Matter alludes to the use of the Song of Songs in Lutheran piety with a reference to Philipp Nicolai's *Wachet Auf*.

Karl F. Fabrizio  
Greenfield, Wisconsin

TRANSFORMED JUDGMENT: TOWARD A TRINITARIAN ACCOUNT OF THE MORAL LIFE. By L. Gregory Jones. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1990.

The bad news is that we are witnessing a spiritual disintegration begun

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by the rationalism of the Enlightenment, (which collapsed into relativism, now nihilism), which C. S. Lewis judged would be the "abolition of man." The good news is that the bad news has moved good writers, unashamed about their Christian confession, to propose effectively to our morally bankrupt age the Christian version of virtue, ethics, and the moral life. While folks like Hauwerwas, Neuhaus, MacIntyre, and Meilaender are not quite household names, neither are they unknown where matters of morality and ethics are debated. In the opinion of this writer, L. Gregory Jones' *Transformed Judgment* has made a modest but important contribution to this Christian proposal to the world.

To suggest that Jones' contribution is modest should in no way be construed as a criticism of his book. His unpretentious objective, as stated in the subtitle, is to move the discussion of the Christian version of the moral life forward by framing it in the confession of God as triune. While the book contains serious flaws, as judged from the confessional Lutheran position, we do well to ponder what kind of moral community the church is in reference to the community of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jones effectively argues that moral discourse must necessarily be informed by and connected with theological beliefs, especially the belief in the trinity. This idea is no surprise to LCMS pastors as we have assumed this connection between morality and theology in the daily exercise of the care of souls. But, on the outside, those who philosophize about morality have been none too keen about letting theological beliefs have any impact on the conversation. The "weak version" of this bias is to allow that theological beliefs might serve to motivate but they do not significantly alter the substance of morality. The "strong version" of the bias is to assert that beliefs either have "no role or a deleterious role in moral judgment." While pastors of the LCMS would continue centering moral judgments in theological beliefs without this book, Professor Jones has, in effect, written us a "ratio" to keep doing what we have been doing.

For Jones, the life lived in the community of the Trinity is the life for which all creation longs and where we become fully human. We take no issue with this notion as we who are baptized into Christ participate in the life which He now lives. The rub comes with Jones' inordinate stress upon understanding this life as "friendship" with God, rather than by the more rigid notions of verdict or sonship. While speaking of our relationship with God as friendship is not unknown in the Scriptures, neither is it central. The notion of friendship is not solid enough to

sustain, on its own, the importance of absolute grace as the way we gain entrance and participate daily in this trinitarian life. Jones writes, "The goal of the Christian moral life is to make one's way back to God . . ." While the paradigm of friendship may well allow for describing the Christian life as making one's way back to God, forensic justification grants no such linguistic latitude. Perhaps it is this inordinate stress on friendship which also leads Jones to place primary emphasis on the dynamics of "becoming" and "learning," rather than on the stubborn and rigid ontological status of justification in describing participation in the life of the Trinity.

Finally, a tedious element in the book was the unfortunate choice to employ, without explanation, the third person singular feminine for the generic pronoun. Several times the reviewer found himself deliberating the motive behind this choice: Was the author trying to be politically correct? Did he have a radical feminist editor? Was he writing of the church as Christ's bride? Whatever else this nonconventional use of the pronoun was expected to accomplish, it succeeded in distracting this reader from an argument which, on the whole, is worthy of further consideration and study.

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PASTORAL LIFE AND PRACTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH. By  
Carl A. Volz. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1990.

Carl Volz, Professor of Early Church History at Luther-Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul (Minnesota), has made a habit of writing books about the early church aimed not at the scholarly community but at the student and the interested layperson. I have always appreciated this aspect of Professor Volz's work, for all too often the patristic period is *terra incognita* to the average reader. In his *Faith and Practice in the Early Church* (1983) Volz demonstrated his desire to summarize, clarify, and explain the early centuries of the church's history to the lay reader and student. This book is crafted according to the same model and with the same readership in mind. That this time Volz chose the vocation of pastor to study indicates Volz's own pastoral interests, his recognition of the importance of pastoral issues in our own time, and his enduring interest in the ongoing daily life of the early church and not only in its theology. We can only applaud him for his selection of theme. Again, Volz shows a keen ability to compile and arrange early church materials

which illuminate and illustrate the themes of his book, and certainly a strength of this book is the apt selection of patristic quotations which abound in the text. In thematic selectivity of material and quotation Volz reveals a broad knowledge of his period and its sources. His easy, conversational writing style is suited to his target "audience" and makes the material accessible and interesting. This book is worthy of college and seminary use and is really an enjoyable requisite for all clergymen.

*Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* summarizes the development and growth of the "pastoral office" as an institution as well as the virtues and activities (life and practice) that were held by the early church to adhere to and inhere in the office. The book is divided into five chapters, each of which discusses one major area of early church pastoral life and practice. Chapter one, "Pastoral Office," describes the development of the pastoral office from the New Testament to the more formalized and even legislated office of the imperial period. Chapter two, "Pastor and People," discusses the nature of the early church congregations (economic, social) and environments of discontent and turmoil (heresy, schism, persecution) that provided the matrix in which pastoral practice had to operate. This chapter also describes the pastoral person as one "called to be holy" and his activities of charity, hospitality, and adjudication. Chapter three, "Pastor and Proclamation," discusses both the catechetical and homiletical activities of the pastoral office in the early church, giving special treatment to two of the greatest patristic preachers, Augustine and Chrysostom. Chapter four, "The Care of Souls," describes the work of the pastor in the areas of counseling, guiding, and sustaining. Here pastoral care of the sorrowing, the impenitent, the fearful, and the indifferent is discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of perhaps the greatest of the pastoral care "manuals" produced by the early church, the *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory the Great (here Volz admittedly draws on Thomas Oden's great study). The fifth and final chapter summarizes the "pastoral" roles of women in the early church, discussing the widow, the deaconess, and female ascetic leadership (virgins, Paula, Melania the Elder, Melania the Younger, Macrina, etc.). The book is generally well done and accurate. Very few spelling errors mar the text, and equally few factual errors mar the narrative (contrary to page 56, Perpetua was martyred in 202, not in 180). Endnotes usually contain only the primary source references, but sometimes include also reference to secondary discussions. This last is important, for Volz offers no bibliography for further reading and study. This lack is lamentable, for a select bibliography would have been useful for the lay reader who is the

target of this book.

Volz's discussion and interpretations are universally fair and evenhanded, and his vivacious narrative style keeps the reader's interest. Some sections were especially interesting. I would mention the discussion of the catechetical activity of the early church, but it occupies a paltry five pages and, in my opinion, is worthy of more. The section on preaching too was well done. Volz recognizes that early church preaching was more public and dialogical than is most preaching today: "We cannot experience the living word as it was preached. We can only imagine the situation of the hearers, the physical surroundings, the time of day, the dynamics of delivery, or the reception of the message by the hearers" (p. 110). Yet that we can more than "imagine" the preaching situation is indicated by Volz himself when he, writing of Augustine, notes that the pastor spoke extemporaneously and that preacher and congregation "were seemingly in constant dialogue"; there was frequent applause; the preacher sat, the congregation stood; the people moved about often conversing among themselves (p.135). We know, too, quite a lot about the physical surroundings and the times of day. Indeed, in some sermons of Augustine (such as those on John) there are elaborations which seem to have been occasioned by audience interruption rather than by the requirements of the text.

One can quibble with Volz on certain interpretations and perspectives. I personally feel it too schematic to adopt von Campenhausen's view (of an early triad of apostle, teacher, and prophet) and think of the "loose" Pauline churches as typical of primitive Christian structure. This "loose" structure is then immediately regarded as prior or first and, it would appear, most authentic. A false juxtaposition between spirit and office is therefore immediately introduced. We may note Volz's conclusion to his discussion of the New Testament: "a gradual development from an earlier period of multiplicity of varied ministries, validated by the Spirit and centered on functions, to that of the Pastorals where we find the existence of fixed offices" (p. 18). This Spirit-office dichotomy recurs especially in discussion of the first three centuries, and implicitly raises the question, never addressed by Volz, of why the early church moved toward an office at all? To say, then, that at the beginning of the third century the "authority" of the pastor did not derive from "office or the rite of ordination" but was associated with "interior qualities of aptitude, moral example, and the natural endowments" (p.26) not only is most certainly descriptively inexact, but makes one wonder why the early church at the beginning of the third century bothered with office and ordination at all.

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Indeed, much of the first chapter, probably overly much, is taken up with a discussion of the development and practice of ordination. One finds, however, not a word about why ordination was important to the way the early church thought and believed.

A pervasive conceptual weakness of the book is the excessively broad definition given to the phrase "pastoral office." For Volz's discussion, it means "a position of leadership recognized as such within the Christian community, with a degree of permanence and status" (p. 13). The imprecision of this definition does not matter much in most of the book which has its focus "primarily upon the office of parish pastor" (p.9). Yet such a definition does not allow Volz to teach us what the early church thought about the specific nature of the pastoral office, that which sets it apart from the people. In short, what were the theological contours of the "pastoral office" in the early church's vision?

His broad definition of "pastoral office" allows Volz to include the service of women under this umbrella. That Volz discusses the services of women in the early church (and they were considerable) under the rubric of "pastoral office" while acknowledging that women were never ordained bishop or priest in the early church, is another way in which the conceptual inexactitude manifests itself. Nonetheless, the discussion of the widows and of the deaconesses is generally acceptable. Given modern usage, however, the assertion that widows were considered "clergy" is problematic even if technically correct (in the sense of "ecclesiastical *ordo*"). At times Volz seems to imply that widows were ordained (pp. 180, 201), which is not true. The view that the Pastorals reflect an overriding desire by the early church to be respected socially and that therefore the roles of women were restrictive at the end of the first century in comparison to more primitive Christianity is also a dubious, if popular, theory (According to Volz, "in this regard the church was more influenced by Roman conservatism than by the Gospel," p. 185). It is by no means certain that the sociology of the church changed so drastically from *circa* 50 to *circa* 90 A.D. that one would have to wait until the end of the first century to feel the need for social respectability. Finally, Volz would have benefited from the magisterial treatment of deaconesses by Aime Martimort, which certainly should have been cited along with the book by Roger Gryson. As Martimort shows, Gallic councils in the fifth and sixth centuries do not imply the existence of deaconesses in the West parallel to the East, but merely that certain aristocratic widows wished to enter the ascetic life.

Volz's book is a summary of pastoral life and practice in the early church. As such, it draws upon a broad range of source materials to illustrate and illuminate. In this enterprise, Volz has succeeded admirably; and despite places where other things could have or ought have been said, the reviewer profited by reading this book and recommends it highly.

William C. Weinrich

NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY: EXPOSITION OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. By Simon J. Kistemaker. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.

Simon J. Kistemaker writes from a conservative, Calvinistic perspective. His conservative point of view is attested by his liberal citations of such past worthies as Alford, Bengel, Lenski, and Zahn; his Calvinistic orientation is confirmed by his many references to the commentaries of Calvin himself. Once the reader knows these things, he will also know pretty much what to expect from any part of the volume. Although the reader is spared having to wade through (the often fruitless) discussions of the latest in bizarre interpretations or *avant-garde* approaches, neither is he offered much beyond a review of isagogical issues (on these the author does a commendable job) or what might have been covered in a good Bible survey course. Scattered here and there (pp. 49, 52, 65, 256, 335, 415, 548, 639) are a few insightful observations, and some helpful background information is given (pp. 468, 491, 768, 774, 941, 946ff.), but for the most part the commentary offers little more than what any pastor or theological student who has even attempted the task of exegesis will have already uncovered for himself. Much of the volume, therefore, is rather banal, occasionally (pp. 197, 344, 354, 442) even frivolous.

Each portion of the commentary includes a section devoted to "Greek words, phrases, and constructions." While helpful for a reader just learning or trying to revive his Greek, seldom do the notes given here provide any indication of the significance of the Greek word or construction for the *theological* meaning of the passage. (Although translation is the first step in exegesis, how often does a commentary need to point out the presence of a genitive absolute construction?) One need not approach the use of this volume with any great fear and trepidation. Neither, however, should one approach it with any great expectation.

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