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## BOOK NOTICES

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*John H. Armstrong*

***UNION WITH CHRIST: THE NEW FINNISH  
INTERPRETATION OF LUTHER***

Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds.  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1998)  
192 pages, paper, \$21.00

It is the nature of historical/theological studies in the life and thought of the Reformer Martin Luther to undergo regular change. Some of this seems to be the result of an over ambitious ecumenism, a flawed psychological interpretation (cf. Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther*) or even questionable historiography. This important book introduces to the English-speaking world the new Finnish interpretation of the theology of Luther, initiated by the writings of Tuomo Mannermaa of Helsinki University.

This new interpretation offers hopeful insights, if for no other reason, precisely because it locates the central thought of Luther in his view of salvation, especially in the justifying work of Christ alone received through faith alone. But here the agreement among Luther scholars will surely break down since Mannermaa's key idea is that for Luther "Christ is really present in faith itself" as set in contrast to a strictly forensic concept of justification that often tends to separate "Christ in us" from "Christ for us." Put simply, this interpretation, which will not go down well with traditional Lutheran hermeneutics, suggests that

Luther's doctrine of justification is more ontological and mystical than ethical and juridical. This insight challenges the German traditions from Ritschl to Ebeling.

Theologian Ted Peters has written about this book: "The indwelling presence of Christ is the heart of 'justification by faith.' The Finns have their hand on this heart. Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson have made it possible for the English-speaking world to share in this heartbeat."

Ultimately *the* issue is not what Luther understood about justification but rather what Paul actually taught. For some time I have been convinced that the Reformation insights on justification needed to be balanced properly by the larger Pauline theme of "union with Christ." This book offers some interesting historical/theological insights that may aid the necessary recovery of biblical balance for what is truly important to serious evangelicalism.

### *EITHER/OR: THE GOSPEL OR NEOPAGANISM*

Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds.  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1995)  
131 pages, paper, \$10.00

Mainline churches have become major mission fields, according to Braaten and Jenson. Many who identify with the church of Christ in these traditions no longer understand what Christianity really is or why they even call themselves Christians. What has happened? Pagan tendencies, which pose as alternatives to biblical orthodoxy, have penetrated the inner life of the church. Pagan ideologies enter the church through various guises in our time: "pluralism," "multiculturalism," "feminism," and "hospitality"—each becoming prominent in the church's vocabulary and life.

How we address these "spirits of the age" is the burden of this work. The contributors seek to accomplish this by juxtaposing the gospel against neopaganism. Jenson's chapter on "God-wars" focuses on the culture and the "culture wars" in which the church now finds itself. Here non-mainliners can find serious help since they are quickly running down the same path. Braaten's chapter suggests that ". . . perhaps, Christianity and Judaism, having lost their cultural authority in America, can nerve themselves to a clean break and return to their normal outsider positions" (36).

Several essays in this collection are not nearly as valuable as those of Braaten and Jenson. Thoughtful evangelicals will applaud on one level, but wince on another, at the essay by Catholic J. A. DiNoia titled "Christian Universalism." L. Gregory Jones, in the final essay, writes of "The Psychological Captivity of the Church in the United States." Here there is much of value as well. Citing Rowan Williams, who suggested that therapeutic inquiry is "a good servant and a bad master," Jones writes "For too long we have allowed ourselves to be mastered by a therapeutic mindset, and it has weakened the body of Christ's ability to faithfully witness to the gospel" (112). Amen!

### *BILLY SUNDAY AND THE REDEMPTION OF URBAN AMERICA*

Lyle W. Dorsett  
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1991)  
212 pages, paper, \$15.00

Wheaton College professor of evangelism, Lyle W. Dorsett, here surveys the life and times of America's greatest tabernacle and tent revivalist preacher of the centu-

ry. Sunday is remarkable, if for no other reason than this—he preached to more than 100 million people in the day before modern television and travel. This is the first full-length biography of Billy Sunday in over thirty years. It is an original contribution which seeks to understand the personal and public life of this controversial figure. Dorsett treats his subject with obvious love, but he never glosses over the flaws of Billy Sunday. Sunday was a man deeply affected by personal insecurities.

Sunday entered itinerant revivalist ministry, barnstorming across small midwestern towns after his famous conversion. He had almost immediate notoriety due to his major league baseball career in the 1890s. Sunday was flamboyant, opinionated and simple. Like far too many in our own day Sunday's fame, financial success, and political influence worked to seriously corrupt both Billy Sunday and his family. This was part of his charm to many. Lyle Dorsett does a great job of communicating the human person of Billy Sunday. What he does not provide is a careful critique of the man whose theology, if he had a theology at all, was anything but Protestant or confessional.

### *READING SCRIPTURE WITH THE CHURCH FATHERS*

Christopher A. Hall  
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1998)  
223 pages, paper, \$11.99

Certain trends within evangelicalism offer considerable promise for biblical reformation. One such trend is the present desire to read and interact with the church fathers. Christopher Hall, an associate professor of biblical and theological studies at Eastern College, St. David's, Pennsylvania, also serves as an associate editor of the

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (a current project from InterVarsity Press). In this helpful small book he gives us an exceptional, clearly written, and informative guide to the fathers. How did they read and interpret Scripture? How might we use their particular insights to better read Scripture in our day?

Hall suggests that despite the eccentricities of certain fathers (it is refreshing to hear this admitted) they hear the Scripture through long listening to the music of Scripture in song, worship, teaching, meditation and oral reading. In this they stand in stark contrast to modern evangelicals and offer a better biblical model for the church to emulate.

Hall surveys four doctors of the church from the East and four from the West. Included are Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great. If one must chose only four from each tradition then Hall has certainly chosen well. In every case he sticks to his focus, namely, the way these fathers exegeted Scripture and how we can make sense of their exegesis and profit from it.

Highly recommended for both beginner and serious student alike!

### *THE ARROGANCE OF THE MODERN: HISTORICAL THEOLOGY HELD IN CONTEMPT*

David W. Hall  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee: Covenant Foundation (1997)  
308 pages, paper, \$21.95

An apologia for the wisdom of the past, much as Christopher Hall's book. Hall argues that moderns have no corner on serious ideas, contrary to their seriously flawed ideas about themselves. The book is helpfully divid-

ed into two parts: First, "Arrogance Toward the Past." Second, "Proceeding Without Caution." In the first Hall shows how the "old way" adhered to confessional standards and spoke of continuity with their forefathers. The new way follows the themes of relevance and disdain for anything considered "old."

Hall suggests that many Christians today have virtually no idea of what happened in the past. As a result of this amnesia there are serious repercussions for the life of the church. Since we keep making mistakes that have already been addressed and corrected by our fathers we are doomed to walk headlong into the tar pits of modernity.

Hall uses an interesting collection of historic figures to show us how the past can properly serve the present; e.g., C. S. Lewis, St. Augustine, Robert Dabney, G. K. Chesterton, Groen Van Prinsterer, Martin Luther, John Calvin and others.

David W. Hall is the pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and a senior fellow at The Kuyper Institute in Oak Ridge. He is the author of several other very useful volumes. This, as well as his other books, can be ordered from The Covenant Foundation, 190 Manhattan Ave., Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 37830.

### **WHAT CHRISTIANS REALLY BELIEVE—AND WHY**

Stanley J. Grenz

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press (1998)

159 pages, paper, \$12.95

Stanley Grenz, is professor of Baptist heritage, theology and ethics at Carey Theological College and professor of theology and ethics at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia. He is also a writer who keeps on producing volume after volume at an almost unbelievable rate. Some-

times he is controversial because of his identification with what is referred to as "postconservative" theology and his desire to do theology from "within community."

Stan Grenz is always a good read. This little book is no exception. Here he provides a clear overview of the essential core beliefs of historic Christianity as set against the context of postmodernity. Grenz has a great capacity for making the faith accessible. What are moderns really searching for? Where can they find it? Preachers, teachers and careful communicators would do well to read Grenz if they would better understand the era in which they live.

### **IN THE BEGINNING: FOUNDATIONS OF CREATION THEOLOGY**

Herman Bavinck

Grand Rapids: Baker (1999)

291 pages, paper, \$15.99

Herman Bavinck is one of the most important writing theologians of the Reformed tradition, yet the bulk of his writings are almost unknown to the English-speaking world, having never been translated from the Dutch. The Dutch Reformed Translation Society's work seeks to correct this loss for those of us who cannot read the Dutch language.

This particular volume is the second translation of Bavinck undertaken in recent years. The first was published three years ago as *The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next* (Baker, 1996), an outstanding and clear-headed work that should be required reading for thoughtful pastors.

Bavinck was clearly a first-rate theologian who addressed issues in his own time which remain issues today. He believed that "The doctrine of creation, affirming the distinc-

tion between the Creator and his creature, is the starting point of true religion." He broadens the theological discussions of creation by delving into other elements of the doctrine which are essential; e.g., angels and the spiritual world, the image of God in human beings, the destiny of creation and humanity, and God's providential care over creation. His approach to interpreting Genesis, and the several related theological-scientific issues, will not please certain strict creationists. It would, however, soften their dogmatism if they would carefully weigh his substantial thought.

#### *WESTMINSTER DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGICAL TERMS*

Donald K. McKim

Louisville: Westminster John Knox (1996)

310 pages, cloth, \$33.95 (paper, \$20.95)

A comprehensive volume which includes more than 6,000 theological terms. The range of disciplines surveyed here includes: biblical studies, church history, ethics, feminist theology, liberation theology, ministry, philosophy, social sciences, spirituality, worship, Protestant, Reformed, and Roman Catholic theologies, and more. Definitions are clear and concise. Both the novice and the specialist will find help in this dictionary.

Along with the previously reviewed *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* this volume can be used with great benefit. The aforementioned *Pocket Dictionary* includes slightly over 300 terms, so you immediately get the sense of the scope of these respective books. Both have their place in a good contemporary library. Donald K. McKim has a solid grasp of theology and church history. He also displays the ability to succinctly define crucial terms, which makes this an extremely valuable work.

#### *THE NEW MILLENNIUM MANUAL: A ONCE AND FUTURE GUIDE*

Robert G. Clouse, Robert N. Hosack, and Richard V. Pierard  
Grand Rapids: Baker (1999)

222 pages, paper, \$12.99

The authors, no strangers to the field of eschatology, combine significant historical research with solid and wise counsel. In the words of Professor Mark Noll, "The *New Millennium Manual* will fortify you against going off half-cocked as the year 2000 approaches." I agree. This is insightful and timely material, especially as this century nears its end.

Should we enter the coming millennium with fear or hope? Should we be pessimistic or optimistic? Why? How certain can we really be regarding the *details* of the future based upon a careful reading of the Scripture? This book is a popular guide but not a simplistic one. It is filled with helpful information that every pastor could use in the months ahead, even beyond the Y2K mania of the present.

Popular millennial speculation needs to be exposed for what it is, and this volume will assist the church leader to do exactly that. Highly recommended.

#### *TO GOD'S GLORY: AN EXPOSITION OF ROMANS CHAPTER 11*

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Edinburgh: Banner of Truth

290 pages, cloth, \$29.99

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' classic expositions of Paul's Epistle to the Romans (now numbering eleven volumes) have profited a generation of faithful ministers. Sad-

ly, not all of these sermons have been available until recently. And there is still more to come if all that the Doctor taught is eventually published.

These sermons, which were actually Friday evening expositions given over many years (in a class-type setting), provide a fitting conclusion to the massive arguments of Paul in Romans 9-11. This is especially true of how Lloyd-Jones masterfully deals with the doxological conclusion of 11:33-36. These expositions, as always, evaluate other views of the chapter following an exegetical and theological method. It encourages believers, very fittingly, to look forward to "the fulness of the Gentiles" and the salvation of "all Israel." This material will greatly stimulate true prayer for revival in our time.

*JOHN H. ARMSTRONG*  
*EDITOR*