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BOOK REVIEWS

HISTORICAL HANDBOOK OF MAJOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETERS

Donald K. McKim, editor
Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press (1998).
643 pages, hardback, \$29.99.

Why pay nearly \$30 for a reference work that can't be mined for clever quotes to slip into a sermon, Sunday school lesson or campfire conversation? Because preaching and teaching the Bible are not solo sports, and because ignorance of the saints who have labored in this vineyard is not a virtue.

Donald McKim, academic dean at Memphis Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee, has gathered essays on more than 100 biblical interpreters ranging from Justin Martyr in the early second century to such contemporary exegetes as Raymond Brown, Brevard Childs and radical feminist Phyllis Trible.

The collection is arranged in six chronological sections, with the twentieth century being divided into European and North American interpreters. An introductory essay offers a helpful overview of each section. As McKim himself notes, readers may quibble about who was included and who was left out. However, the breadth of his selections is without question one of the strengths of this sizable volume.

Essays on the individual interpreters place them in their historical and theological context, outline the major

influences on their thinking, and note their major contributions to the history of biblical interpretation, frequently including quotes from the individual's key writings. Most are four or five pages long. All conclude with bibliographical references for further study.

FROM THE CHURCH TO THE ACADEMY

In reading through these entries chronologically, one cannot help but notice that for biblical interpreters in the early and medieval church, and even for some in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (such as Charles Hodge), reading Scripture was first and foremost an exercise in spiritual formation.

For these exegetes, to read Scripture was to be shaped and formed by Scripture's ultimate author, the Holy Spirit, into the image of the living God; it was to learn about the nature and character of God, and about God's intention for His human creation. As a result, reading and interpreting the Bible were simultaneously intensely personal and unavoidably communal. Scripture could not be rightly understood apart from the church, and, if rightly understood, could not help but make a difference in the readers' faith and life.

But McKim's work helps us see that as we enter the modern era, reading and interpreting the Bible have become quite antiseptic, a scholastic exercise undertaken with clinical detachment. The task of "correctly handl[ing] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15) has been removed from the church and reassigned to the academy by the academy itself. Indeed, the prevailing academic ideal is that the most trustworthy Scripture scholars are those who lack a prior commitment to Scripture's truthfulness and trustworthiness.

The still unfolding impact of the church's acquiescence can be measured, at least in part, by the low esteem in

which Scripture is held by many pastors who have been trained in academically correct seminaries, pastors who now stand in our pulpits and, as one pastor of a Reformed church publicly described his own approach, "preach against the Bible." No longer ministers (literally, "servants") of the Word, far too many pastors now see themselves as Scripture's master.

As this academic arrogance has trickled down from the academy to the pulpit to the mainline pews, the membership and influence of mainline Reformed denominations have eroded steadily.

That the church has bent the knee to academic imperialism would outrage Hodge, Edwards, Calvin, Luther, Aquinas, Augustine, Origen, Athanasius and most of the other interpreters whose work is described in this insightful volume.

A reflective reading of this handbook might help begin the process of prying loose the academy's stranglehold on Scripture and returning the Bible to the church, which then could once again affirm that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

ROBERT P. MILLS
Lenoir, North Carolina

PRAYER THAT SHAPES THE FUTURE: HOW TO PRAY WITH POWER AND AUTHORITY

Brad Long and Doug McMurry
Grand Rapids: Zondervan (1999).
227 pages, hardback, \$12.99.

What kind of prayer shapes the future God intends?

"Dynamic prayer," which, according to Brad Long and Doug McMurry, "is not the flowery and poetic prayer of the

pietistic movements of the past [but] bold and gutsy stuff, a tool for creative people, like the rough hammer-and-nails materials used by framers of buildings."

Prayer That Shapes the Future is a book for builders. It is for those who want to learn to seek God's will in prayer and then act on what they find. It is for Christians who desire greater intimacy with God and more meaningful engagement with the world. It is not for the faint-hearted or the spiritually smug.

Part One of this book lays a foundation for prayer, outlining what prayer is and identifying spiritual counterfeits. It describes dynamic prayer as including listening prayer, intercession, prayer of agreement and warfare prayer. Part Two explores the role of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in our prayer. Here dynamic prayer is described as "a ministry birthed by the Spirit of God, a way of yielding ourselves to divine power flowing through us. In this way, we not only do works *for* God; we can do the works *of* God."

These chapters ground all that follows in solid biblical and theological teachings.

Part Three, "How to Gain God's Vision and Bring It to Birth," takes up nearly half the book. "To receive and fulfill a vision, we must take the risk of acting in obedience and begin," Long writes. "Many a vision has been aborted because we waited until everyone agreed or the money was provided and there was no risk of failure. It is not people but God who fulfills the vision, so we must move and act on his timetable."

In this section Long and McMurry relate personal experiences of God's leading. At times, their language may transcend the comfort zone of noncharismatics. But the power of prayer is unmistakable in their testimonies.

(And while we're in the neighborhood of language and experience, isn't it curious that while many theological lib-

erals publicly demand that their experiences be legitimated, an evangelical's experience of a personal relationship with Jesus, especially when coupled with a charismatic's experience of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, is routinely deemed unsuited to ecclesiastical discourse?)

Part Four offers practical instructions on shaping ourselves, our households, our churches and whole societies through dynamic prayer.

Prayer That Shapes the Future is the third book coauthored by Long, executive director of Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International, and McMurry, pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia. It builds on and extends their earlier efforts in *The Collapse of the Brass Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 1994) and *Receiving the Power: Preparing the Way for the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 1996).

If this book is widely read, and if increasing numbers of Reformed Christians faithfully practice its biblical principles, we might be amazed, and the world might be transformed, by God working in us and through us.

ROBERT P. MILLS
Lenoir, North Carolina

WHOREDOM: GOD'S UNFAITHFUL WIFE IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1996).
200 pages, paper, \$18.00.

Dr. Ortlund's book is part of a new series in biblical theology edited by Dr. Donald A. Carson. So far, Ortlund's book and two others have been published. Judging by the quality of this volume under review, it offers to be a promising series.

Dr. Ortlund, who taught Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is now using his considerable gifts as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Augusta, Georgia. He writes deftly on a theme of Scripture which has been largely overlooked in the last one hundred years—the propensity to whore after other loves rather than God. Ortlund and Carson are both well aware of how the concept of whoredom offends our natural sensibilities. Its pervasiveness in Scripture, however, merits serious and sustained consideration. It also goes without saying that our “natural sensibilities” are not the most reliable detector of where truth is to be found.

Dr. Ortlund shows how the Bible paints a graphic picture of “Yahweh’s marriage to His people.” “God as husband” is seen in His jealous desire for our devotion and in His righteous indignation over rival gods (or substitute lovers). As Ortlund says, “. . . Yahweh’s jealousy for His wife Israel requires that she offer her devotion to no other lover, just as man will share his wife with no other.”

Even with a great and good Husband, the people of God are prone to wander. We lose confidence in the sufficiency of God according to Ortlund and thus fall prey to whoring after rival gods. The insanity of chasing after other gods is found in the leanness of soul that always attends such foolishness. Sin certainly has many characteristics; clearly one is its irrationality. That which gives life, namely God, we stray from. Forsaking our God always results in having “broken cisterns” (see Jer. 2:13).

I am holding back from citing the graphic depictions of whoredom that are found in this book. Suffice it to say, Ortlund does not revel in using such language. He does feel constrained to do so for faithfulness to Holy Writ.

Though we stray from God and do fall prey to other gods, there is always forgiveness with Him. It is not a cheap grace, for God “wants our hearts, our loyalty, our love for

Himself alone. He wants to find in us the same sense of intimate belonging to Him that is appropriate to sexual union on the human level.”

DAVID GEORGE MOORE
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CHRISTOLOGY

Hans Schwarz

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1998).

352 pages, paper, \$25.00.

When theologian Carl Braaten calls Hans Schwarz’s book on the doctrine of Christ “the best available one-volume textbook on Christology” my attention is distinctly raised as a reviewer. Braaten is not a person who hands out such commendations without careful thought. Add to Braaten’s endorsement Gabriel Fackre’s comment that “Schwarz makes a compelling case for a full-orbed understanding of the person and work of Christ in thoughtful give-and-take with reductionisms ancient and modern,” and you have a powerful incentive to read this important work.

Make no mistake about it, debates about the person of Jesus are alive and well at the end of the millennium. We have seen a number of books on the historical Jesus appear in the last ten years (e.g., N. T. Wright’s excellent books which defend the historical Christ as over against the heresies of writers like Marcus Borg). Several of these books are quite valuable. What makes Schwarz unique in this almost overcrowded field is that he engages the contemporary debate while using, at the same time, the entire witness of Holy Scripture and Christian tradition fully and fairly. Schwarz surveys the history of New Testament scholarship, probes the textual material of the Scripture itself, and then

connects all of this to the major themes of both traditional and modern Christology. He does this in three parts: (1) In Search of the Historical Jesus, (2) The Biblical Testimony and Its Assessment Through History, and (3) The Relevance of Jesus Christ for Today. His style is readable, thus making this a book busy pastors and serious laypeople alike can read with profit.

I am personally convinced that we need a new groundswell of interest in Christology that will lead to a new preaching of Christ in the church. I have long sensed that until we put Christ back into His proper place within evangelical thought and life we will never see the renewal that so many of us ask God to send. Schwarz will foster this kind of theological renewal.

Hans Schwarz is professor of Protestant theology and director of the Institute of Protestant Theology, University of Regensburg, Germany, and adjunct professor of systematic theology, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina.

EDITOR

EDWARDS IN OUR TIME: JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE SHAPING OF AMERICAN RELIGION

Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo, eds.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1999).
214 pages, paper, \$18.00.

Serious, thoughtful essays on the importance of Jonathan Edwards for American religious history are, thankfully, becoming more and more common. Add to this growing list the helpful new volume, *Edwards in Our Time*, which contains the nine essays (but not the oral responses) presented at an Edwards conference held in Philadelphia in 1996. Contributors include Stephen H. Daniel, Roland A.

Delattre, Walter V. L. Eversley, Allen C. Guelzo, Robert W. Jenson, Sang Hyun Lee, Gerald R. McDermott, John E. Smith and Helen P. Westra.

Topics taken up on the doctrine of God include matters such as "Edwards on God and Nature" and "Postmodern Concepts of God and Edwards's Trinitarian Ontology." After addressing a perennial Edwards issue, ethics, the essays include two entries on preaching and revival titled "The Pastor As Revivalist" and "Divinity's Design: Edwards and the History of the Work of Revival." The book concludes with two essays included under a section called "Eschatology." Here Robert W. Jenson, a Lutheran theologian, and Gerald A. McDermott contribute two very helpful essays. McDermott, in addressing Edwards's view of the eternal destiny of the unevangelized, notes that God did not have to answer every question in this regard as clearly as we might like, precisely because for Jonathan Edwards

A glimpse of the divine glory was intrinsically self-validating. This deity was beautiful and therefore just. To demand that it stand before the human bar of justice was an act of unconscionable hubris. It made no philosophical sense. It would be comparable to asking how many inches are in a pound, or whether yellow is round or square.

Therefore the fact that God had provided revelation for the majority of the heathen was sufficient to exonerate divine justice. We should be content with that peek into the otherwise inscrutable sanctum of the divine wisdom, and trust that the balance of the divine economy—while baffling the canons of human probity—was finally just. Hence, the deist reproach, Edwards reasoned, had just been turned back, and the deity's glory but further magnified (202).

Each contributor to this volume seeks to engage a contemporary issue by using Edwards as a kind of prism

through which they explore themes and important concerns of theology. There is a wide variety of perspectives held by the contributors. This will undoubtedly frustrate some readers, but it must be expected from such a collection. As with most such collections the writing style is not consistent and the content is not of equal value. Having said this I still think this is a useful volume for many, especially for those of us who value Edwards as *the* major American theologian and student of true reformation and revival.

EDITOR

UNRIDDLING OUR TIMES: REFLECTIONS ON THE GATHERING CULTURAL CRISIS

Os Guinness, ed.
Grand Rapids: Baker (1999).
141 pages, paper, \$8.99.

This unusual book includes seven readings which are presented to encourage thoughtful reflection by the reader on where we are today as a culture. These readings are each introduced by capable comments offered by several different writers, including Guinness himself.

Os Guinness, well-known to most readers of this quarterly, is the author of numerous books and is a speaker of international renown. Born in China, he was educated in England and is an Oxford graduate. He has lived in the United States since 1984 and is presently a senior fellow of The Trinity Forum, a "leadership academy without walls" that engages the leading ideas of our time in the context of historic Christian faith.

What Guinness has been doing for more than thirty years is observing and understanding our present culture. He has consistently argued, he reminds us in his Introduc-

tion, "that the present period in the United States is 'the American Hour,' a *kairos*-like moment of opportunity and challenge at the climax of the American century" (11).

Guinness reasons, rightly it seems to me,

... that the root of the crisis is not in America's political order or economic order but in her cultural order—the world of churches, synagogues, families, schools, colleges, the press and media, arts and entertainment. Also the response of the religious right to the crisis is as much a problem as a solution and needs to be redirected before it is too late (11).

Guinness notes, again in his Introduction, that James Russell Lowell, American diplomat and poet, was once asked by a French statesman in the nineteenth century just how long the American republic would last. Lowell's reply is obviously apropos for our time, for he said, "As long as the ideas of the men who founded it remain."

Guinness surmises:

Unquestionably, no generation of Americans has treated the framers' ideas as more alien than this one, and the consequences are easy to see. But is there a gathering cultural crisis as this book claims? Unlike storms, earthquakes, and other forces of nature, the rise and fall of nations is never deterministic. Human initiative and divine sovereignty are always decisive. Cultural crises may therefore build up but pass.

But when it becomes evident that America's current condition puts her solidly on one of history's classic "storm corridors," it would be prudent, to say the least, to be on the watch as the storm signs mount. For Christians to take refuge in the coward's comfort of being right posthumously is for us to "miss our moment," and there is no mistaking what Jesus thought of that. Responsible "unriddling" of the signs of the times is an urgent requirement of our day (12).

This is the thesis of Guinness' present volume, i.e., the "unriddling" of these dark times. You may not agree with everything this book suggests about these times, but you will be hard pressed to ignore the thesis itself. Prophets are used wisely to offer warnings that thinking Christians cannot afford to ignore. Get this book, read it carefully and pass it along to your entire church leadership team. Unless your leaders understand the times they will probably keep marching to the culture's drumbeat of success. It is also likely that they will be attracted to the church growth movement's incessant preoccupation with "what works" unless they understand how all of this is really culture's invasion of the church.

EDITOR

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Gregory Baum, ed.
Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books (1999).
263 pages, paper, \$20.00.

Evangelical leaders, both pastors and teachers, are often poorly read in the theological perspectives of those they differ with on matters of Christian doctrine. It would serve such leaders well to read theological overviews that take a radically different approach to their own. Such a book is this collection of interesting essays.

Gregory Baum is a name not recognized by most evangelicals. He is a Roman Catholic theologian, now a professor emeritus of McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Since 1962 Baum has edited *The Ecumenist*. In this volume Baum has organized an internationally renowned group of scholars to offer theological assessment of our contemporary history.

This is not history, in the straightforward sense. It is a theological interaction with historical currents and landmark events in the present century. Authors explore the relationship between theology and World War I, the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression, the rise of fascism, the rise of the World Church, and the Holocaust. In addition to these landmark events, trends and movements are explored in the same way; e.g., the women's movement, ecology, globalization, the postmodern debate, etc.

The volume is an ecumenical work with articles written from a Catholic standpoint in some cases, while in others the Protestant position is assumed. In several cases the author's confessional background is not revealed. Baum writes in his Introduction:

... this collection documents in a persuasive manner that theologians have reacted in a creative manner to the challenge posed by the historical events and the cultural movements of the twentieth century. They have produced insights and developed critical perspectives that will continue to enlighten the churches in the coming age. Despite certain episodes of betrayal, the story of twentieth-century theology is one of fidelity and anguish—fidelity to God's revealed word under changing historical conditions, and anguish over the unanswered questions and the powerlessness of truth in a sinful world (viii).

For many evangelicals this twentieth-century story includes more "betrayal" than Baum and his contributors recognize. But for many of us the need to "anguish (over) unanswered questions" is also required. This book can provoke such anguish, which might be the best thing some evangelical readers will experience by reading it.

EDITOR

THE FIRST ENGLISH PRAYER BOOK

Thomas Cranmer

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing (1999 reprint).

146 pages, cloth, \$17.95.

Without doubt, one of the of the great contributions to the English Reformation was Thomas Cranmer's *Prayer Book*. Cranmer and other early reformers wanted to simplify the Latin services of the medieval church in order to produce a comprehensive guide for both priest and congregation. In 1548 Cranmer presented a draft of his proposal to a conference of scholars. The ultimate result, after several changes, was a beautiful, clear, biblically informed guide for worship.

What Cranmer actually aimed at was a kind of uniform worship which would use the continuous reading of Scripture and the recitation of the Psalter during a given period of time. Following the Catholic *Breviary*, a Latin book of liturgy, Cranmer was able to condense the complexity of the monastic offices into two services of Morning and Evening Prayer. Through this approach he was able to preserve the monastic traditions but, at the same time, make them accessible to the common worshiper.

On Sunday, June 2, 1549, the Sunday after Ascension, congregations throughout England worshipped with the Latin service book for the last time! The following week *The Book of Common Prayer* was introduced throughout the land. By King Edward's Act of Uniformity, Cranmer's book became compulsory. But not all evangelicals were happy. They saw too many concessions to Catholicism in Cranmer's work, especially regarding church ceremonies. Stephen Gardiner gave the book a Catholic reading, prompting Cranmer to call him an "English Papist." (Thus, the rise of what has been called "Anglo-Catholicism.")

Cranmer's purpose, it seems in hindsight, was to introduce change slowly with the goal of reformation over the long term.

Cranmer revised the book in 1551-52 and presented it to Parliament in 1552. The revisions acknowledged many of the evangelical objections to the first edition and thus omitted references to prayers for the dead and to the "Mass" and "Altar." Roger Steer notes that "Cranmer tried to eliminate everything which he could not defend as scriptural" (*Guarding the Holy Fire*, 32).

Many evangelicals in our time are searching once again for a meaningful scriptural spirituality. They could find much help in their search by reading and using a book like this one.

EDITOR

SCIENCE, LIFE, AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Malcom A. Jeeves and R. J. Berry

Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

305 pages, paper, \$19.99.

When Galileo suggested, in 1633, that the earth rotated around the sun, the response was shocking. The church had assumed for hundreds of years that it knew these things and that Galileo could not be right! From 1663 to the present a veritable war has existed between the proponents of science and Christian faith. From Galileo's time until now, the result has too often been that neither party has listened carefully to the other.

Malcolm Jeeves and R. J. Berry, both respected scientists in the United Kingdom, enter into this long fray by providing an extremely helpful survey of contemporary issues in battle between science and the Christian faith. Their voice is one of reason and carefulness.

The story begins with an excellent survey of several foundational topics; e.g., the Hebrew-Christian and Greek influences on modern science and the nature of the scientific method itself. These historical accounts read well and are extremely important for the modern debates over creationism among evangelicals.

This is followed by some well-written material which addresses five major areas: origins, ontology, biology, psychology, and ecology. In dealing with origins the authors' approach will not satisfy some who are convinced that "strict creationism" is the only proper way to interpret the Genesis account. They place creationism and evolution in juxtaposition showing how the two views often do not hear one another well. Their conclusion is that "Genesis (indeed the whole Bible) is little concerned with *how* God carried out his mighty works. The Bible does not describe *how* God created" (115). When all is said and done this conclusion is sound. Jeeves and Berry will try to show you why. You may not be convinced but at least you should give them an audience.

I recommend this book to pastors and teachers. It will go a long way toward "freeing" up some of the hard categories we have created that unnecessarily divide evangelicals from one another and cause uncharitable practices in our churches.

EDITOR