

Reviews



THE BOOK OF REVELATION: A COMMENTARY ON THE GREEK TEXT, by G. K. Beale. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999. Pp. 1245.

As this millennium draws to its close, interest in the book of Revelation remains high, and Beale's encyclopedic commentary has a great deal to offer those who wish to probe its mysteries. Perhaps surprisingly, full-scale commentaries on Revelation have not been produced in English since the 1920s. Notable commentaries have appeared in recent decades, but they have been of more modest length. Beale's commentary, along with the three-volume commentary by David Aune in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, changes that situation.

In his introduction, Beale helpfully notes that Revelation addresses multiple situations. It is not only a book for persecuted Christians, as some interpreters have suggested, since a number of the churches addressed in Revelation 2-3 suffered more from complacency than overt threats. Therefore, Beale proposes that John wrote "to encourage those not compromising with idolatry to continue in that stance and to jolt those who are compromising out of their spiritual anesthesia so that they will perceive the spiritual danger they are in and repent and become witnesses to the risen Christ as Lord" (33). Recognizing the range of problems experienced by the seven churches of Revelation helps modern readers more readily discern the value of Revelation for varied situations in churches today.

Modern interpretations of Revelation vary widely, from the futuristic views of Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth* to studies of Revelation's political ideology. Beale identifies his approach as "modified

idealism" (48), which means that he recognizes that most of Revelation's symbols are transtemporal: they have particular meaning for the first century church, but are also relevant to situations in the church throughout the centuries. With many recent interpreters, Beale recognizes that Revelation's symbols are evocative and capable of bearing multiple meanings, yet he also insists that the range of meanings for a given symbol is limited and that meaning can be stated in propositional terms. The symbols may mean a number of things, but they do not mean just anything. Beale also gives due weight to the fact that the cycles of images in Revelation are repetitive, so that the book does not give a linear view of future events, but recapitulates its basic message of judgment and hope several times. This basic insight means that the book cannot be used to create a neat timeline for the end of the world.

A good example of Beale's approach can be found in his comments on the notoriously difficult vision of the millennial kingdom. Most futuristic interpreters think that the millennial kingdom will begin after the second coming of Christ. Beale, however, finds it most plausible to think—as Augustine did—that the millennium began when Satan was bound during Christ's first coming. Futuristic interpreters base their view on the fact that Christ's return is pictured in Revelation 19 and the millennial kingdom appears in Revelation 20; but Beale insists that the visions do not fall into a temporal sequence. He maintains that the vision of Satan's expulsion from heaven in Revelation 12 and the vision of the binding of Satan in Revelation 20 are two versions of the same event, and that these two chapters in-

interpret each other even though they do not follow each other sequentially in the text.

Futuristic interpreters usually think the “first resurrection,” which occurs at the beginning of the millennium, means that the saints are raised from the dead to reign on earth. By way of contrast, Augustine identified the first resurrection with baptism. Beale disagrees with both, arguing that the first resurrection refers to the preservation of the souls of the faithful in heaven. The millennial kingdom is therefore a heavenly reality, not an earthly one. During the millennium, Satan is confined to the “abyss,” which is not a place but a metaphor for the sphere in which evil powers operate. Satan is not destroyed during the millennium, but remains active. To say that he is “bound” means that he is limited in his ability to deceive.

One notable feature of this commentary is its attention to the Old Testament. Many have observed that paraphrases of and allusions to the Old Testament pervade Revelation. Beale rightly notes the reciprocal relationship between Christ and Israel’s scriptures. For John, “the Christ-event is the key to understanding the OT, and yet reflection on the OT context leads the way to further comprehension of this event” (97). Christ and the Old Testament are taken together and interpret each other. A second feature is the attention given to treatments of Revelation that range from conservative evangelical to historical-critical. This enhances the commentary’s value because the questions that students and lay people ask about Revelation come from many quarters.

The size of this commentary will make it daunting for many to use. Verse-by-verse comments are interspersed with detailed discussions of various points, such as the significance of a “seal,” the identity of the 144,000, and the Old Testament background of various passages. The casual student of Revelation will be overwhelmed by the detail, but those who want comprehensive coverage with summaries of recent

scholarly discussion will appreciate Beale’s contribution and find it to be a valuable tool for many years.

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THESE THREE ARE ONE: THE PRACTICE OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY, by David S. Cunningham. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998. Pp. 368.

Some theologians can be guilty of addressing only their fellow members of the academic guild and ignoring the concrete needs of professional church workers. In his latest book, David Cunningham refreshingly counters this tendency. Addressing the concerns of both professional theologians and parish pastors, Cunningham intertwines both theology and practice. This is due perhaps to two significant factors: (1) he focuses on how congregational life can be re-envisioned in light of the renewal of trinitarian theology, and (2) he relies on his prior work on the intersection between communication theory (always important for pastors) and theology. Cunningham genuinely advances trinitarian thinking since he specifies how the doctrine of the trinity can alter the landscapes of ecclesial and congregational life, a task not yet significantly addressed by other trinitarian thinkers such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Robert Jenson, Eberhard Jüngel, Walter Kasper, and Karl Rahner. Unlike these thinkers, Cunningham is less concerned with developing a theory of divine relationality in conversation with the great trinitarian masters such as Hegel, Barth, and/or the Cappadocians. Rather, he seeks a thorough rethinking of Christian practices, given the truth that God as triune is thoroughly relational.

Venturing into unexplored territory, Cunningham systematically guides his reader through this new terrain. The book is divided into three main divisions: trinitar-

ian (1) beliefs, (2) virtues, and (3) practices, with each part corresponding to one of the persons of the trinity. Each division is further subdivided into three chapters. In the first division Cunningham positions his perspective in relation to recent trinitarian thinking, shows how God is self- and other-relating, and renews discussion of the *vestigium trinitatis* (traces of the trinity in creation) begun by St. Augustine. Building on his background in rhetoric, he notes that trinitarian thinking has not impacted the church as much as it should because trinitarian thinkers fail to focus on how the church receives their new perspectives. He also cautions against some theologians' disposition to "scapegoat" previous trinitarian thinkers whom they identify as *the* villains who began the process of marginalizing the trinity in theology (31). In contrast to some trinitarian thinkers, he appeals to St. Thomas Aquinas's thinking on God as offering a clear theory of the triune dynamics of how "God produces God" (58). The trinity for Aquinas should not be thought of as three persons who are ontologically prior to and independent of each other but instead as "subsistent relations," in which any given person of the trinity cannot be thought of apart from the other three (71). In conversation with Aquinas, Cunningham suggests a new model for the trinity, "Source, Well-spring, and Living Water"—a view whose import for the church he claims should be tested in both theory and practice. Concluding the first division Cunningham retrieves the Augustinian theory that one can find traces of the trinity in the created order. Interestingly, he sees rhetoric as a vestige of the trinity, since it is based on a triad of rhetor, argument, and audience (117).

In the second main division he examines trinitarian virtues, standards for how we ought to live, or "dispositions that *God has by nature*, and in which *we participate by grace*" (124). He points out that "As gifts, these virtues are not forced upon us; but we can allow them to form us, and thus allow God to take us up into the divine life" (124).

The first virtue, "polyphony," challenges the common assumption that oneness and difference are mutually exclusive categories (127). Appealing to the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar, he affirms that truth (in trinitarian perspective) is "symphonic," and as such is able to maintain some plurality within an overarching unity (130). The second virtue, "participation," acknowledges that the Three mutually indwell each other and that Christians are likewise called to mutual participation in God and with one another in the Eucharist, which is a clear challenge to current North American individualism. The third virtue, "particularity," suggests that one's subjectivity is constituted on the basis of the rhetorical activity of persuasion.

The third division acknowledges that distinctively trinitarian beliefs and virtues ought to result in three specific practices: peacemaking, pluralizing, and persuading. Here Cunningham reflects on issues crucial for parish ministry such as the baptismal incorporation of young children and people of diverse cultures into the worship life of a community and the question of the basis for leadership in the Christian community as grounded in persuasion.

A careful thinker, Cunningham is aware of the fact that in our current context, which tends to bifurcate theology and practice, his work is a novel venture. However, his book sets a powerful precedent. Perhaps more "practical" theologians need to ground their contextualizing of the faith in classical texts and more "systematic" theologians need to concern themselves with how their thinking can intersect with the daily life of the laity. Many readers will quickly discern Cunningham's Episcopal heritage, particularly with his affirmation of the historic episcopate as the best model for teaching authority in the church (321). Some readers may be concerned with the fact that Cunningham sometimes seems to suggest a synergism between God and humanity that is foreign to Lutherans. In light of this, Cunningham perhaps should consider the pos-

sibility that the doctrine of the justification of the ungodly may be a key by which to interpret God's life as triune.

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IN DEFENSE OF DOUBT: AN INVITATION TO ADVENTURE, by Val Webb. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1995. Pp. 168. \$13.99 (paper).

Some years ago Langdon Gilkey emerged from the science-and-religion wars to ask (in a public lecture at Luther Seminary): "Will fundamentalism be the only viable form of religion in the twenty-first century?" The answer would seem to be "Yes!" if religion entails the absolute choice of "Faith" or "Doubt." There are strong currents at work portraying faith as opposed to doubt. The themes are familiar. The real believer does not doubt. History shows us that the saints of God did not doubt. When doubts arise, they should be resisted. At the very least we should be moving along through the stages of "faith development" toward a doubt-free telos. To hearken to the voice of our doubts is to take the fork's path leading to relativistic nihilism.

Doubt needs a defense attorney and has found one in Val Webb, an independent author and teacher with degrees in microbiology and theology. Following Wilfred Cantwell Smith, she makes a foundational distinction (2-3) between faith ("a relationship of trust in or loyalty to something experienced"), and beliefs ("ideas, concepts, or propositions" formulated and functioning within a religious tradition). Doubts are positioned as auditors of belief, arising when beliefs contradict experience (80, 89, 118). Indeed, doubts serve faith as "nudges that push us to move from one limiting paradigm to a richer one" (85). Webb has assembled a rich group of supporting witnesses: Malcolm Muggeridge, Henry Thoreau, Simone Weil, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Edward Schille-

beeckx are all cited in recounting her own journey. She draws particularly effectively on feminist authors, pointing out how women who doubt are doubly victimized (61-62). In issuing what I take to be (in Lindbeckian terms) an "experiential expressivist" statement she draws significantly on the movement of process thought emanating from the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. Chapter seven, "A Certain Richness of Experience Now," is an effective exposition and appropriation of Whitehead's notion of causal efficacy. This epistemological understanding enables Webb to distinguish her appeal to experience from dependence on our feelings (which are notoriously "erratic, even fickle, and serve, not as a 'given' for faith, but as an ice-cream treat on a good day" [120]). The theological point she persistently makes is that God is present with us in the moment, not at the end of a triumphalist faith journey (95). God comes to us "mediated, either by the church, by an interpretation of scripture, or through our own interpreted experience" (79).

In sharing her own faith-and-doubt journey (or, better, doubt-serving-faith) Webb opens up a significant perspective on the human shape of the God relationship. The book, written in lively prose and with an encouraging spirit, is well sub-titled "an invitation to adventure." The adventure does not give way to soporific tranquility, for she rejects the closure carried in conventional talk of faith journeying. And yet there is in these pages talk of truth ("better than security" [90]). That talk involves distinguishing degrees of probability and certainty (77).

This book is not simply an exercise in self-expression. Thus the book's last chapters take up the themes of the faith community and interfaith dialogue. She would welcome a preacher acknowledging doubt in sermons, for example. How hopeful can one be that this perspective will have wide applicability? In the further development of this promising approach three "adventur-

ous” tasks can be identified: (1) further clarifying of the resource of faith experience, (2) distinguishing existential doubt from a Cartesian methodological doubt, and (3) reconstructing the belief system as that doubles back to bear on the faith experience.

With regard to the first, Webb writes that “perhaps the greatest paradigm change of all confronting Christianity is not a particular belief, but the new understanding of what is absolute and what is conditioned by culture” (77-78). The ability to accept ambiguity in belief systems seems secured by the resource of faith experience, even though that itself does not occur in an unmediated fashion. Is there some resource even deeper? “The one thing that can hold us together, even when we differ in theologies and experience, is the relationship of love” (138). It would help to hear more of this reality of relationship. The second and third tasks relate to how doubt can be so strongly claimed as friend for/within faith. The dominant modern alternatives were laid out by David Hume and René Descartes. The task just mentioned calls for an expansion of Webb’s rejection of a Humian definition of experience. So, too, the creative doubt celebrated in this book needs to be distinguished from the Cartesian methodological doubt devoted to securing certainty. Perhaps the distinction will be best served by a difference in terminology. Thirdly, even genuine existential doubt can be destructive. Webb seems to agree with Fowler that in one stage of faith “there is the possibility of throwing out both faith *and* belief” (88). She acknowledges that doubts, themselves natural, can be creative or destructive depending “on how we handle them” (25). That, she continues, “depends on the cultural and religious baggage we bring to them, which depends on our ideas about authority and power” (25). I take it, then, that the task of constructive theology, deconstructing and reconstructing, will need to be engaged in relation to the first order reality of faith and doubt.

Chalice Press has announced a new book by Val Webb, an introduction to feminist theology. Readers of this book will look forward to that new contribution, even as they appreciate the adventure so well introduced in the present volume.

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MARTIN LUTHER: EXPLORING HIS LIFE AND TIMES, 1483–1546, by Helmar Junghans. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. \$39.00 (CD-ROM).

Fortress Press has made its first major foray into conveying the events and message of the reformation in computer format. The fruits of this endeavor are abundant and delightful. The author of the audio and textual material, Helmar Junghans, draws upon his wealth of knowledge on the reformer’s life and thought, the social context of that time, and the visual media of the sixteenth century to create a multidimensional effect.

The CD-ROM is composed of several layers of material. One could treat it as a book with bells and whistles, reading the broad outlines of Luther’s history as the words appear upon the screen. One can follow the development of Luther’s life through childhood, the monastery, the attack on indulgences, and so forth until Luther makes his last journey and declares himself a beggar before God. Yet even when treating this new media as though it were the old, new opportunities will tempt the reader to be engaged in new ways. When one comes to “Wittenberg” in the text, the option to see a photo of that historic place is offered. If the reader wishes to know what Bugenhagen looks like, a simple shift of the mouse supplies her with an image. Also, Scott Hendrix, the narrator of the text, is ever available to do a dramatic reading of a passage written by Luther that summarizes the essence of a given period in the re-

former's life. In the chapter on reformation beginnings, Hendrix reads the *Ninety-five Theses* one by one. Also available in this section is a large copy of the original document that can be explored through scrolling. While in this layer of the program one can move easily from a given topic within a chapter to another with a slide of the mouse. If one tires of reading for oneself, then the next layer will allow the reader to become a listener.

At this new level, short films illustrate the story line in simple animation often built upon original woodcuts or paintings of the day. The combination of sixteenth-century art with twentieth-century animation creates interesting, if at times quirky, images. As Luther sets out on a journey the original woodcut of the region shifts with him. As Münster undergoes its version of reform, fanatical leaders become demons and a naked lady flees the polygamists. Though content seems slow in coming in this mode and is often overshadowed by attempted effects, I found that this combination engaged my five-year-old who is incapable of reading the text for herself. I suspect it might also be useful for engaging those who are capable of reading but drawn to more contemporary media.

Another layer of this project explores related themes in more detail than might be provided in a typical biography of Luther. One enters into "alchemy" and receives a brief introduction to the state of the discipline in Luther's day. The same can be done in relation to "purgatory" or "toys" or "death." In this area, the state of the art of reading comes alive. Various visuals present the way that reading occurred in Luther's day. A brief text comments on the shift from the medieval reader who read as an act of adoration to the modern reader who engages in intellectual consumption. Then historical artifacts adorn the screen: a reader's table, a pair of glasses, a library shelf. These minor elements come together with major effect as a kaleidoscopic image of a given cultural dynamic of the era. Here the

media provides opportunities not affordable in book form; a full color image of a dozen toys would be far too expensive in the older print media.

The final layer of the application includes a complete indexing of the material covered elsewhere that can be discovered through simple search functions. In addition, a large quantity of expanded information on themes referenced in the larger text is available in an extensive glossary. In this area, maps, chronological listings of events, many of Luther's shorter writings (the *Ninety-five Theses*, *Heidelberg Disputation*, *Small Catechism*, among others), brief biographies, musical scores, illustrated title pages, and a large quantity of other morsels of information are available. Again, this media provides a format for the inexpensive sharing of a mass of visual data in full color and great detail. Original documents flash upon the screen for the eye to behold. Luther's signature, his death mask, Cranach's paintings and woodcuts, papal bulls, all are there to see. A cyberglut of Luther memorabilia and sixteenth century stuff helps to remind us that the reformation was not an ethereal event, but one which happened in the real world of children's toys and pamphlet literature; of concrete people—popes, peasants, and kings.

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REINVENTING AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM: CHRISTIANITY IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM, by Donald E. Miller. San Francisco: University of California Press, 1997. Pp. 253. \$27.50.

Writing in *The Christian Century* in the summer of 1955, Henry P. Van Dusen, President of Union Seminary in New York and pre-eminent representative of the American Protestant establishment, claimed that a "new reformation" was changing the face of

the Christian church. Van Dusen had just returned from a tour of the Caribbean where he encountered the phenomenal growth of Pentecostal churches. He declared that these churches signaled “a new, third major type and branch of Christendom” that would stand alongside Roman Catholicism and historic Protestantism as a witness to Jesus Christ. In 1958, he repeated his argument to a larger audience in the pages of *Life* magazine, calling Pentecostalism and other forms of sectarian Protestantism (e.g., Adventists, Nazarenes, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian and Missionary Alliance) the “Third Force” of Christianity. However strange the theology of these churches might appear, Van Dusen believed that they bore the imprint of the divine. The enthusiasm and the purity of the supernaturalism evident in the movement would make the ancient apostles feel at home. Van Dusen challenged the Protestant establishment to come to terms with the new sectarians and learn from them.

What Van Dusen discerned forty years ago is even more apparent today. As we come to the end of the century, it is clear that the torch of faith has passed from European Christianity to the younger churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In this endeavor, the Third Force has led the way. In 1958, Third Force Christians numbered 20 million worldwide, of which 8.5 million Pentecostals were the largest single group. Today, Pentecostalism alone—at least according to some estimates—exceeds 400 million adherents. While Christianity continues to thrive in America, it is the churches of the Third Force, not mainline Protestantism, that have been the primary beneficiary. Mainline leaders have been slow to grasp the significance of this trend for the future of Protestantism. They need to play catch-up. I can think of no better book with which to begin a program of remedial reading than *Reinventing American Protestantism*. Donald Miller’s credentials as a mainline Christian are as impeccable as those of the late Henry P. Van Dusen. A

Professor of Religion at the University of Southern California, Miller is a liberal Protestant Episcopalian with a record of publication to prove it. *Reinventing American Protestantism* is a sociological study of three successful non-mainline church movements. The first is Calvary Chapel begun in 1965 as a Christian fellowship for surfers and hippies. Its founder was Church Smith, a pastor of the Foursquare Gospel. The second is Hope Chapel started in 1971 by another Foursquare Gospel pastor, Ralph Moore, after he reportedly received a vision from God while eating in a restaurant. The third is the Vineyard founded in 1974 by a Calvary Chapel pastor (and former Lutheran) Kent Gulliksen who had experienced the gift of tongues at the age of seventeen. In 1982, John Wimber, an adult convert to Christ by way of the Quakers, became the primary leader. The growth of these three church bodies has been astonishing. Together they have spawned nearly 1400 congregations in the United States and abroad. The churches are in a loose ecumenical fellowship with each other and maintain informal relations with their affiliated congregations.

Like sectarian Protestants of old, the ecclesiological profile of these churches is non-hierarchical and non-liturgical. They tend to be biblicistic rather than doctrinal, experiential and emotional rather than intellectual. Sacramental incorporation into the church is a function of personal conversion and testimony. The churches also seem to be willing to engage in cultural accommodation. Calvary Chapel, Hope Chapel, and the Vineyard originated as creative and successful responses to the cultural watershed of the 1960s. The majority of their members are baby boomers born after 1945. Most studies show that the majority of baby boomers do not like bureaucratic structure, institutional rules and rites, the “brand” loyalty of denominational affiliation, and the general notion of tradition. Boomers are fiercely individualistic. They “like running and managing their own or-

ganizations” and focusing attention on “local” interests. They tend to be more affective than intellectual. They are attracted to therapeutic categories as means to self-understanding.

Calvary, Hope, and the Vineyard affirm these baby-boomer values. Worship is contemporary in music and emotional in style. Clergy and laity usually dress informally. The churches are highly tolerant of diversity in personal life and background. Pastors cultivate an intimate and self-revealing style of ministry. Sermons are not abstract and theological, but practical, focusing especially on psychological well being. There is a deep commitment to extensive small group ministries that are tailored to specific interests. Lay leadership is highly valued. Access to the sacred has been democratized by radicalizing the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers.

While Miller found that the churches of Calvary, Hope, and the Vineyard embrace “an ethic of openness and tolerance” and value psychological principles, he also discovered that they are “hostile to the narcissism they see in contemporary therapeutic values.” Thus, while cultural accommodation is an important factor in the success of these churches, it does have its limits. Pastoral counseling, for example, tends to be “direct” and even “confrontational.” There is “an enormous emphasis on personal accountability.” The goal of living is not self-actualization, but conformity to biblical injunctions. In this regard, Calvary, Hope, and Vineyard temper their individualism with a strong counter-emphasis on community. The churches lift up the local congregation as a protection from the anonymity and isolation of contemporary secular culture. Modern American life is characterized by job insecurity, forced mobility, divorce, the lack of access to extended family, the fear of raising children in a society that exposes them to too much too soon. This makes the local congregation, grounded in clear biblical teaching, an alluring substitute environment. These churches thrive because they

fulfil a perceived need of “warmth” in American society. People feel they can share their needs and know that someone will care for them, here, week after week.

Miller’s claim that the style of Christianity dominated by eighteenth-century hymns, routinized liturgy, and bureaucratized layers of social organization is gradually dying is backed up by plenty of sociological studies. He also believes that Calvary, Hope, and the Vineyard point the way to the future as “new paradigm churches” for American society. While futurology is a tricky business, I think Miller is right. It is commonly projected that future growth in faltering Protestant mainline denominations will be confined to a remnant of less than twenty percent of congregations. This means that eighty percent of mainline congregations will be involved in maintenance ministry or will be subject to the agony of membership decline. The question for mainline pastors is: “To which group will you belong?” Each year hundreds of pastors, especially those born since the early 1960s, resolve that they want to be part of the growing twenty percent. To try to reach this goal, many of them attend conferences to learn how to adapt the programs of outreach developed by the “new paradigm churches” two decades ago. The church growth seminars held at Saddleback in Southern California, Willow Creek in Illinois, and Community Church of Joy in Arizona are among the most popular of these conferences.

Part of the power of Miller’s book is that it represents “a personal pilgrimage” for its author. Miller did not expect to find what he found. Whereas he had thought for most of his adult life that the problem of the church was the rational one of the dissonance between faith and modern knowledge, he learned anew the old truth that “the heart has its reasons that reason does not know.” At Hermosa Beach in Southern California one Sunday afternoon, Miller watched seventy new members give testimony and receive baptism. “Several cited

drugs or divorce as the precipitating factor that brought them to Hope Chapel. Others talked about a general feeling of emptiness and commented on the family warmth they found the very first time they came to Hope Chapel. As they were talking, I flashed back to another baptismal scene...when John baptized people in the river Jordan, and I began to wonder if those first century converts might have said something similar to the seventy people I had just heard give witness."

John Henry Newman once observed that the essence of Protestantism is the search for a "fabulous, primitive simplicity." Whether this search represents strength or weakness is a matter of debate. What is true, I think, is that the future of Protestantism belongs to those Protestants who search for that ancient simplicity and believe in their hearts that they can find it.

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SPIRITUAL LITERACY: READING THE SACRED IN EVERYDAY LIFE, by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat. Touchstone Books, 1998. Pp. 608. \$15.00

I loved this book! The authors have carefully selected a delicious smorgasbord of readings from virtually every walk of life, inviting us to read them, taste them, savor them, and grow.

There are readings of poetry and prose, fiction and non-fiction. There are excerpts from movies and plays, records and tapes, from videos and theatre, and they are all carefully woven together with the experiences and insights of the authors inviting us into their meanings and their messages. Each time I pick up this book to but savor one small portion, I find my own spiritual sensitivities sharpened, and I feel enriched.

The introduction sets the stage. Here we

are introduced to the authors' understanding of spirituality as they encourage us to discover the spiritual in the world around us. They believe that we can all read the sacred in everyday life. Many of us have done our own bit of searching for glimpses of God along life's way. Sometimes they are easy to see. Sometimes they are not. In the words of Samuel Miller, "In the muddled mess of this world, in the confusion and the boredom, we ought to be able to spot something—an event, a person, a memory, an act, a turning of the soul, a flash of bright wings, the surprise of sweet compassion; somewhere we ought to pick out a glory to celebrate" (6). Fred and Mary Ann Brussat have served up a plethora of such glories and their book invites us to celebrate them.

"The Alphabet of Spiritual Literacy," chooses words for each of our twenty-six letters to heighten our spiritual awareness. Words like "Attention," "Beauty," and "Compassion" are explored, then threaded throughout their selected readings to elaborate on the various practices of spirituality which are revealed throughout the book. "If you are ever tempted to ask why a particular passage in this book is spiritual," the authors advise, "check the alphabet and you will find it demonstrates one of these practices" (19).

The readings themselves are wonderful. Let me share with you a couple of samples. The first comes from Thich Nhat Hanh:

There are so many things that can provide us with peace. Next time you take a shower or a bath, I suggest you hold your big toes in mindfulness. We pay attention to everything except our toes. When we hold our toes in mindfulness and smile at them, we will find that our bodies have been very kind to us. We know that any cell in our toes can turn cancerous, but our toes have been behaving very well, avoiding that kind of problem. Yet, we have not been nice to them at all. These kinds of practices can bring us happiness. (377)

And then another, this one from Anthony De Mello:

The Master once proposed a riddle:
"What do the artist and the musician have
in common with the mystic?"

Everyone gave up.

"The realization that the finest
speech does not come from the tongue,"
said the Master. (299)

These are among the shortest of the readings. No matter what their length, they will warm your heart and challenge your mind as well as your faith. They have proven to be invaluable for me and my own private and personal walk of faith, and a rich resource for my preaching, teaching, and writing. The *Brussats* have drawn from the Hasidic masters, the Desert Fathers, and the monastic community, as well as from contemporary theologians, anthropologists, psychologists, and musicians. A wide variety of religious traditions and practices are represented throughout, and if one expects to find readings that are strictly from a Christian perspective, then one will be disappointed. But for those who would like to have a treasure of teachings right by their side, and a wise friend to take along with them on their own journey through life, I would encourage you to "taste and see."

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TE DEUM: THE CHURCH AND MUSIC,
by Paul Westermeyer. Minneapolis: For-
tress, 1998. Pp. 412. \$25.00 (cloth).

In his recent book on the church and music Paul Westermeyer expresses the modest hope that the reader will discover something of the church's encounter with music in worship. In reality his reach is more extensive. Westermeyer takes a running leap of about thirty-five pages to discuss musical antecedents from the Old Testament. Then, disclaiming that he is

writing a history or survey of music or a text about hymnody, he nonetheless proceeds to limn in rich detail a picture of the church's relation with music by invoking history, theology, biography, musical terminology, cultural analysis, considered opinion, and more than a dollop of polemic.

From beginning to end Westermeyer's focus, however, is primarily on "the people's voice." He consistently describes the various forces at work in the western church that have alternately given rise to the people's participation in song and the dynamics that restrained or inhibited that voice. At the outset of his narrative Westermeyer indicates his intention to offer "a theological essay with the people's song the central concern" (xiii). After more than 300 pages in which he describes the many influences that encouraged or discouraged this song, the author concludes by affirming its crucial place and value. "The song itself is witness to Christ's promise to be with us to the end of time (Matthew 28:20)....The song points not to trying to save the church's life...but to losing our life for Christ's sake and the world's, to a hearing and singing with one voice beyond our hearing and singing, which join us to our sisters and brothers in Christ before us and after us" (320).

This point of view, held throughout the book, is presented with passion or strongly held opinion. Because church music is so important, it is not surprising passions are quickly aroused and that opinions are strongly held. While Westermeyer is, on the whole, fair-handed in presenting the data, he certainly has predilections and preferences. He clearly defends the vocation of the church musician (195). Further, he is concerned to see that church music not ignore certain matters, such as the role of women and social justice.

Above all, Westermeyer is no friend to music that is superficial or of poor quality. Taking aim at one of his favorite targets, he observes that "Pietists tended to discount all music in services except simple and often sentimental hymns....If everything is re-

duced to feelings, and music is to arouse them, the implication is clear: Why are the church and its worship needed at all?" (229-30). It is clear from statements like this that Westermeyer is capable of passionate argument. It is also clear that he presents his material not only for the purpose of edification but also for further conversation. To that end he includes extensive footnotes, some of which are conversations in progress with other scholars and colleagues in the field (e.g., 30, 196). There is also an ample chronology which stretches from 1750 B.C.(!) to the 1990s. That is followed by a thirty page bibliography. These resources make it possible to do what Westermeyer strongly advises: "I hope they'll encourage you to grapple with the issues yourself, argue with me and the others we encounter along the way, and figure out what you think" (xiv).

Westermeyer's narrative pattern is itself instructive. He tends to give a brief historical background of a period or a movement. Then he moves to a description of the music that accompanies or undercuts that movement or period. Along the way he highlights certain issues, like the theology of the reformers or the interplay of eucharistic thought and practice on musical concerns. On the whole, he is even-handed in his discussions, though, as noted, he has strong opinions, even biases. He also has a well-tempered sense of humor. For example, in discussing the development of singing schools in the nineteenth century, Westermeyer notes the instructional intent of the movement. However, "[t]oward the end of the nineteenth century recreation and courting, never absent from these gatherings, became more important than the original instructional intent" (250).

The writing style throughout is brisk and provocative. In dealing with technical matters, which may be unfamiliar territory to some readers, Westermeyer demonstrates admirable pedagogical style. In describing the development of monody as a counter-movement to Renaissance polyphony, for

instance, Westermeyer introduces the reader to the term "figured bass" or basso continuo. "The keyboardist 'realized' the figures that signified chords and nonharmonic notes. The melodic lines at the 'top' and 'bottom' of a piece served as borders. In between an organ or harpsichord filled in the implied harmonies. A sixteenth-century version of a jazz chart resulted" (234).

It is at places like this (and many others as well) that the book could have been enhanced by some visual musical illustration. While there are doubtless space considerations in a book of this size, things might have been clearer if the reader could envision how a figured bass is charted or what the notation for plainchant or fasola looks like. Also, there are tantalizing but brief references to music in the Eastern church tradition. But there is scant discussion of those 60,000 published hymn incipits that formed a large part of the Byzantine repertoire (101).

These demurs are minor in the light of the rich resource that this book represents not only for students but for pastors, worship committees, anyone interested in understanding the place of music in worship. Many readers will enjoy an acquaintance with such characters as Chrysostom, Watts, and even Pambo, who walk and sing through these pages. Helpful facts and insights can enrich people as they lift their voices to sing a hymn like "Amazing Grace." Westermeyer tells us that the line "Was blind, but now I see" was probably lifted by John Newton "from one of those hymns where seeing meant perceiving the mystery of the grace of Christ conveyed with the bread and wine" (208).

There is little doubt that readers will alternately fume and delight at the provocative narrative. When Westermeyer turns his steely eye on the effects of pietism or on the conflict wrought by some forms of contemporary expressions such as praise choruses or "teeny hymns," some readers will be bound to take exception. But that argument is something Westermeyer encourages, for he believes reflection and discussion about

what the people sing are important. To balance the occasional musical jobation, however, Westermeyer ends his book on a note of exultation, a fitting *te deum*. "God continues to be at work in church and world... where with one voice we sing a new song. It is not the counterfeit song of our novelty.... It is what its proleptic reality always has

been, the new song of the psalms in Christ, the song of the church that pours itself out for the life of the world in praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from age to age and forever" (320).

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