

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 62: Number 3

July 1998

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Book Reviews

ANTHOLOGY OF THE WRITINGS OF J. MICHAEL REU.
Edited and with an Introduction by Paul I. Johnston. Texts and Studies in Religion Volume 71. Lewiston, Queenstown, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997. v + 357 pages. \$99.95.

Readers of *CTQ* will likely be most familiar with J. Michael Reu's magisterial work, *The Augsburg Confession* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1930), in which he gathers together in one volume the most important documents that surrounded the production of the *Grundbekenntnis* of Lutheranism. But this all-too-frequently overlooked theologian also produced numerous other helpful works that have been inaccessible due to language barriers: Much of Reu's most penetrating work was published only in German.

Johnston and the team of translators he has assembled begin the process of overcoming this deficiency. This volume is a collection of several of Reu's significant writings, primarily drawn from *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, which he edited from 1904 to 1943.

Reu was born in Diebach, Bavaria. After coming to America, he was ordained in the Iowa Synod in 1889. In 1899 he was called to Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, which he served until his death in 1943. He received the Th.D. degree from Erlangen in 1910. His better known works include *Catechetics* (1918), *Homiletics* (1922), and *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* (1929). But it was in the *Zeitschrift* that Reu contributed some of his most significant work, which, until now, has languished in obscurity. It is for this reason that the current volume is particularly valuable. Reu now has the opportunity to speak to the broader Lutheran community of the late twentieth century. Of special interest in this collection are "Concerning the Difference in Theology and Church Practice between German and American Lutheranism (77-87)," "Review of Dr. Eler's *The Structure of Lutheranism*" (121-129), "The Disintegration of the Confession through Pietism" (131-138), and "Must the Discussion with Missouri Now Cease" (161-179).

The book does, however, have a number of liabilities. In the first place, Johnston has made the unfortunate editorial decision not to include secondary citations made by Reu in the body of the articles. From the writings contained in this collection it quickly becomes apparent that Reu often opened his articles with a lengthy quotation from a source he then engaged critically. For some reason the editor has chosen to omit these significant references. Thus, one is left to reconstruct the substance of these quotations from Reu's comments

reconstruct the substance of these quotations from Reu's comments on them. The most egregious example of this occurs in the first article where one is not sufficiently able to fabricate Schmauk's remarks from Reu's criticisms, and so is forced to the library to track down the references in the original. This should not have happened and hinders the usability of the book. The reader has no opportunity to judge or consider the accuracy of Reu's interpretation of the primary source. The problem could easily have been remedied and should have been. Already priced beyond the means of the parish pastor and theological student, the addition of a few more pages would not have had a consequential impact on the price. And if length was the supreme consideration, several of the book reviews could have been omitted toward the end. As it stands, one's reading of the text is consistently interrupted. To get a sense of just how disruptive this is, the reader might imagine reading through the book of Romans, and whenever Paul cites an Old Testament text the editor would insert a bracketed comment to the effect: "Paul has a lengthy quotation here from the book of Isaiah." It simply makes for cumbersome reading.

Secondly, the book lacks a significant historical introduction and anything approaching a critical apparatus. What we have instead are Reu's words very nearly without, as the American Bible Society would approve, note or comment. Reu is simply not well enough known to justify the omission of explanatory features in the book, particularly since the only significant source for Reu materials is the out of print *Johann Michael Reu: A Book of Remembrance: Kirchliche Zeitschrift 1876-1843* (Columbus, Ohio: 1945).

Yet, I believe the volume is ultimately of great value. Johnston has done American Lutheranism a great service in furnishing this volume. Let us hope that Johnston's allusion to the appearance for further volumes being published materializes (page 2). Confessional Lutheran pastors would be well served to familiarize themselves with this insightful and careful confessional Lutheran thinker. If only Mellen Press would lower its prices so that pastors could afford to purchase its books.

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

CAESARIUS OF ARLES: THE MAKING OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN LATE ANTIQUE GAUL. By William E. Klingshirn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 317 pages.

Caesarius of Arles is well-known to students of historical theology for his role in the Synod of Orange (529). In this study, William Klingshirn paints a more complete portrait of Caesarius by investigating his activities as bishop and placing him firmly in the political and social setting of late antique Provence. Two principle difficulties confronted Caesarius: a population that did not necessarily agree with his definition of the Christian life, thus necessitating his reform efforts, and a dangerously fluid political situation that continually threatened his institutional foundations. He dealt with the first primarily through preaching, both his own and that of his priests and deacons. In his own sermons, Caesarius tirelessly condemned both those in his own congregation who perpetuated customs of pagan origin and those who openly maintained the old ways. He also ensured that the preaching task did not fall entirely on his shoulders. In legislation that was often copied, he authorized the preaching of priests and proposed that even deacons could read the sermons of the fathers. Politically, Caesarius survived through shrewd action as patron of the Christian community in Arles and by courting the appropriate authorities, whether his Gothic overlords or the Bishop of Rome. Ironically, although Caesarius's authority as bishop waned with the Frankish conquest of Provence, his influence was felt centuries later in the reform legislation of the Carolingian church.

Klingshirn deftly weaves together the strands of Caesarius's story. His treatment of the political situation in Provence, the social setting of Arles, and Caesarius's monastic career all help to illuminate the career of a bishop of late antiquity. Along the way the reader discovers some fascinating details about lay piety in the south of France in the sixth century, noting, for example, that it became customary to bathe in rivers or the ocean on the eve of St. John the Baptist's Day. One of the difficulties with this book, however, is that the author's sympathy lies too clearly with such practices. He chides Caesarius for attempting to impose monastic piety in his diocese and praises the peasantry for creating a form of Christian piety sensitive to community needs. In spite of this politically correct bias, Klingshirn's study remains extremely valuable for the student of

church history by shedding light on an individual and an era all too often overlooked.

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CHARACTER IN CRISIS: A FRESH APPROACH TO THE WISDOM LITERATURE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By William P. Brown. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996. 179 pages. Paper.

Political campaigns and the cultural debate have brought character and virtue to the attention of the American public in recent years. William P. Brown looks to the Old Testament wisdom literature for an ancient voice to address the contemporary discussion. Brown sees the previously neglected books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes as more than a collection of profundities. Brown interprets this wisdom literature as an integrated narrative. The reader moves with the literature through various stages of maturity. The goal, according to Brown, is to grow from a self-centered awareness to communal, even global consciousness. Through this growing process, the reader struggles along with the literature to apprehend the breadth of human wisdom and its relation to the divine. Brown's interpretation of the maturing process in the ancient wisdom literature is a fresh commentary to a generation besieged by questions of character and virtue.

Proverbs is the starting point of Brown's interpretation of the wisdom literature. A book that at first glance looks like little more than a collection of sayings is shown to be a complex narrative that draws the reader to the feet of lady wisdom herself. The narrative of Proverbs invites the reader to take the place of the silent son, listening to the advice of his parents as they instruct him in virtuous living. Brown sees genius in this approach because "of all social domains, the family provides the strongest appeal and basis for shaping and reorienting the praxis of the community" (page 45). Set in the midst of intellectual values, literary expressions of wisdom, and instrumental virtues are the moral, communal virtues (page 25). Brown sees the integration of sayings that would be considered mundane with the more profound virtues in a sapiential corpus. The silent son who is instructed in the home is being prepared to take his

place as a responsible member of the community. The opening chapters of Proverbs have the silent son learning from his parents and hearing the call of both lady wisdom and the strange woman. Brown notes that by the time the reader arrives at the end of the book, the silent son has become the wise sage sitting in the city gates praising wisdom, his intimate friend and spouse (page 48).

Job picks up where Proverbs ended. Brown points out that Job is the wise sage who sits in the gates. Brown sees the story of Job as the next step in sapiential maturity. The mere acceptance of the tenets of wisdom is not yet the mark of a sage. Job is comfortable in his place among the wise ones. His story puts wisdom to the test. According to Brown, Job is a story of transition in which the fear of God moves one from simple acceptance to communion with wisdom. The story places the reader in contact with Job who learns that wisdom is found in neither ease of life, nor length of days, nor the accumulation of tradition. Job questions conventional wisdom and finds that those who do not blindly accept it become despised in the community. This is the contemporary problem for those who suspect the "traditional" as the unquestioned solution to modern problems. Job matures beyond the "traditional" rejecting the notion that wisdom is an accumulated quantity stored for later use. Job is suspect of the wisdom of his friends who claim to have answers to his crisis. Brown shows that the poem in chapter 28 is a "veiled judgment on the dialogues" (page 70). True wisdom is not a commodity distributed as needed. Instead, Job likens it to a precious metal which must be mined, its course known only to God.

Brown sees Job 28 as the crux of sapiential maturity. Once the "inaccessibility" of wisdom is realized, Job (and the reader) can concentrate on personal integrity as the hinge upon which all communal responsibility swings. Job is indefatigable in his defense of the questioning of conventional wisdom and his desire to probe the depths of divine wisdom. This brings forth the audience with God. Job attains an understanding that the divine wisdom is above all other wisdom in its creativity and non-intrusive approach toward creation. Divine wisdom allows the free development and vivaciousness of all creation. Through Job's sapiential journey, the reader, whom the corpus of traditional wisdom has instructed, is now challenged to perceive the Divine wisdom in a global and transcendent way. In breaking away from the confines of conventional wisdom, the Joban story invites the reader to see God's

creative and non-intrusive wisdom as a mighty blessing rather than a capricious curse. Job's transition is complete when his new perspective on wisdom produces the high virtue of compassion. The crux of Job's restoration is not so much the replacement of his properties and health as it is his prayer for his friends and the giving of his inheritance to his daughters. Job invites the reader to participate in the divine wisdom through communion with God and acts of compassion toward neighbors.

Brown finally turns to Ecclesiastes and the plight of Qoheleth to complete the life journey of the sage. If Proverbs is basic narrative in wisdom for the young that they may mature into wise ones, and Job is the story of the sage in his prime struggling to a higher wisdom, then Qoheleth is the story of the elderly sage speaking to a new generation with the experience of one who has walked the path of wisdom. Brown characterizes Ecclesiastes as a narrative of life and a warning to those who would seek the wise life. True wisdom recognizes the transitory nature of life. Qoheleth recommends the savoring of one's youth when life can be enjoyed for its own sake before the cynicism of old age sets in. Brown sees that Qoheleth pays a price for sapiential maturity. Like Moses whom God allowed to see the promised land, but never enter it, Qoheleth has reached a level of maturity in wisdom where he can discern the boundaries of virtue and vice, but not transcend them (pages 140 and following). Within this framework, the familiar "fear of God" becomes a reverence toward the One who gives us the ability to see our limitations. Humanity is unique in its ability to step back from its own situation and take account of its limitations. According to Brown, this is both a blessing and a curse for Qoheleth. Where Job questioned the conventional wisdom, Qoheleth rejects it out of hand. Brown puts a heavy emphasis on translating הבל (vanity) with the connotation of "absurd."

Brown asserts that in Qoheleth's discernment of the limitations of virtue, he concludes that human existence is absurd and meaningless (pages 130 and following). This assertion is not in keeping with the flow of Brown's thinking. The wise sage has thus far been engaged by wisdom and a struggle to understand. Brown's Qoheleth now reaches the end of the road, no longer engaged by wisdom, but vexed by it. Brown's Qoheleth can only retreat to a *carpe diem* simplicity and enjoyment of life, giving reverence to God in a sort of "thanks for the adventure" spirit. This is an unfortunate point of

departure for Brown. Although more difficult, it may have been better for the author to have explored the possibility that Qoheleth was exhorting the young to find wisdom in monotony and in the mystery of living rather than in something outside or transcendent of life. Brown is correct in interpreting Qoheleth's warning to avoid the trap of self-reliance (pages 146 and following). However, he should not interpret this too broadly and take it to be a surrender to one's limitations. Brown does well to point out that the wise sage of Job who has risen to a level of sapiential maturity must now deal with self-consciousness. His resolution of Qoheleth's struggle is less than satisfying.

As the "culture wars" rage on in postmodern America, the Old Testament wisdom literature may indeed be one of the best places to turn for foundational work in the area of character and virtues. William P. Brown brings the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes into the dialog as ancient books with a contemporary message. If Qoheleth is right in any regard, it is that there is nothing new in human existence. The same questions concerning virtue and character are still being asked in a milieu that is not so far removed from Old Testament Israel. The literature is seen as a grand narrative that engages the reader. Brown is able to weave a thread throughout the stories that gives them an integrated interpretation. The reader is challenged to grow from simple instruction in the relationship between prudent living and wisdom to a struggle to understand the very nature of divine wisdom. Although in the end, Brown's interpretation of Qoheleth fails to reach the depths of understanding that is available in Ecclesiastes, *Character in Crisis* is no less a worthwhile journey into the heart of wisdom.

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Books Received

Allen, R.S.M., Sister Prudence. *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C. - A.D. 1250*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1997; Montreal: Eden Press, 1985. xxiv + 583 pages. Paper. \$35.00.

Anderson, Paul N. *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in The Light of John 6*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997. xvii + 329 pages. Paper. \$25.00

Blowers, Paul M., editor and translator. *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*. The Bible through the Ages, volume 1. Based on *Le monde grec ancien et la Bible*, edited by C. Mondesert. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997. xi + 468 pages. Paper.

Forde, Gerhard O. *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1997. xiv + 121 pages. Paper. \$20.00.

Gestrich, Christof. *The Return of Splendor In the World: The Christian Doctrine of Sin and Forgiveness*. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 1997. xxiii + 344 pages. Paper. \$40.00.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids/Cambridge; William B. Eerdmans, 1997. xcii + 928 pages. Cloth. \$50.00.

Gunton, Cohn E., editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xix + 307 pages. Cloth \$59.95; Paper. \$18.95.

Head, Peter M. *Christology and the Synoptic Problem: An Argument for Markan Priority*. Society for New Testament Studies, Monograph Series 94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xviii + 337 pages. Cloth. \$59.95.

Hunter, Kent R. *Confessions of a Church Growth Enthusiast: An Evangelical, Confessional Lutheran Takes a Hard Look at the Church Growth Movement*. Fairway Press, 1997. 277 pages. Paper. \$14.95.

Middendorf, Michael Paul. *The "I" In the Storm: A Study of Romans 7*. Saint Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1997. 303 pages. Paper.

Molstad, John A. *Predestination: Chosen in Christ*. The People Bible's Teachings. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997. 125 pages. Paper. \$8.00.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Systematic Theology*, volume 3. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1098. xvi + 713 pages. Cloth. \$49.00.

Wall, Robert W. *Community of the Wise: The Letter of James*. The New Testament in Context. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997. xi + 354 pages. Paper. \$24.00.