

trine of providence appears as if God is manipulating everything to fulfil his divine plan but this view would be transformed if viewed within a Trinitarian framework, and more precisely, 'Trinitarian talk about God's ordering of creaturely affairs must take its bearings decisively from what is disclosed of God's manner of working in Jesus Christ' (89).

I thought the book suffered from two major weaknesses. Firstly, Wood does not engage to any great extent with the biblical texts that have provided the backbone for the traditional doctrine of providence to be held by so many for so long. Secondly, his choices of works to engage with were quite obscure. Aside from Sherlock's work as a representative of the traditional doctrine, these are the Calhoun Commission, a study of the Federal Counsel of the Churches of Christ in America entitled '*The Relation of the Church to the War in the Light of the Christian Faith*,' and the ideas of the non-Christian American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962). Wood suggests the Calhoun Report to be 'the most valuable brief articulation of the Christian doctrine of providence produced during the past century' (94), even though on the next page he adds, 'The word "providence" appears only rarely in the document... The traditional terminology of the doctrine is likewise scarce, but the substance is unmistakable' (95).

In summary, the author is clearly dissatisfied with the traditional doctrine of providence. In such a brief work however, the fresh proposals he brings for discussion, fail to provide, in my view, convincing enough arguments to reject the traditional doctrine of providence. However, the book is welcomed as an attempt to examine the best way to express how God is said to act in and with the world.

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***Participatory Biblical Exegesis:
A Theology of Biblical Interpretation***

Matthew Levering

Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2008, ix + 302.

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SUMMARY

We do not read the bible like we used to read it and this, according to Matthew Levering, is not necessarily a good thing. Something has been lost in the way we do exegesis and Levering argues that our exegetical practice has suffered under the strain of a faulty and unbiblical understanding of reality. Levering offers a helpful approach to exegesis without becoming bogged down in overly-complicated hermeneutical theory.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wir lesen die Bibel nicht mehr so, wie wir es gewohnt waren, und das ist laut Matthew Levering nicht notwen-

digerweise eine gute Sache. In der Art und Weise, wie wir Exegese betreiben, ist etwas verloren gegangen, und in *Participatory Biblical Exegesis* argumentiert Levering, dass unsere exegetische Praxis unter der Belastung eines fehlerhaften und unbiblischen Verständnisses der Wirklichkeit gelitten hat. Levering bietet einen hilfreichen exegetischen Ansatz an, ohne sich in einer überkomplizierten hermeneutischen Theorie zu verzetteln.

RÉSUMÉ

Nous ne lisons plus la Bible comme on la lisait autrefois et, aux yeux de Matthew Levering, ce n'est pas nécessairement heureux. Nous avons perdu quelque chose par notre manière de faire de l'exégèse et notre pratique exégétique souffre à ses yeux d'une compréhension de la réalité erronée et contraire à la Bible. Il propose de façon salutaire une autre approche de l'exégèse, sans se perdre dans des théories herméneutiques trop compliquées.

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We don't read the bible like we used to read it and this, according to Matthew Levering, is not necessarily a good thing. Something has been lost in the way we do exegesis and, in *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, Levering argues that our exegetical practice has suffered under the strain of a faulty and unbiblical understanding of reality.

As the argument runs, exegesis today is almost entirely informed by a linear-historical perspective that views reality as a sequence of moments unrelated to God's reality. The consequence of such for Scripture is a view that regards the biblical text and its interpretation as ends in themselves and thus closed off from hearing the voice of God or referring to realities beyond the text. Levering grants that while moment follows moment in succession, these moments are not atomistic, 'but rather constitute an organic web of interrelation' (p. 1). This is so, he argues, because 'the intimate "vertical" presence of the Trinity's creative and redemptive action suffuses the "linear" or "horizontal" succession of moments' (p. 1). This appeal to doing exegesis under the governance of the divine economy is not, however, something new but is in fact a call to return to a patristic-medieval model of interpretation that sees the text as more than simply a product of natural processes.

The harvest of findings gathered in from literary and linguistic studies, from archaeology, philology, the study of origins and so forth is found to replace those participatory tools that include doctrines and practices. These participatory tools had been commonplace throughout church history and, for Levering, it is not simply a matter of making use of one set over the other, but rather both sets of tools are required to enter fully into the realities taught in the biblical text.

In the second chapter Levering traces the gradual decline of a participatory model by examining the exegetical practice of ten prominent Catholic interpreters and their treatment of John 3. 27-36, ranging from the thought of Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) to 'the full-

scale development of Catholic historical-critical biblical scholarship in the twentieth century' (p. 145) as evidenced in the work of Raymond Brown (1928-1998). In the third and fourth chapters, Levering explores what it means to do exegesis under the instruction of God, the Teacher, in whom the reader participates.

In the fifth chapter Levering addresses the challenge posed by the Enlightenment thinkers Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza that biblical interpretation fosters division and inevitably leads to a violent exegesis. Essentially, religious communities are not to be trusted with the Bible as their interpretations easily morph into oppressive power. The solution put forth by the aforementioned is 'that neutral parties must take over the exegetical task' (p. 108), which in both cases means the state is sovereign over religion in the public sphere. As one of the finest contemporary readers of Thomas Aquinas, Levering's appeal to the medievalist's exegesis of John 14.15-17 is a fruitful example that grounds interpretation in the Church as an exercise in wisdom and love that also side-steps the accusation of religion's appeal to power per Hobbes and Spinoza (p.132).

Readers should be aware that, while the argument is straightforward and well structured, the footnotes almost don the form of an encyclopaedia and amount to a towering 113 pages. Yet, if one is prepared to track along, one will be well rewarded with Levering's labour in reading deeply on the subject.

One reservation concerns a central aspect of the notion of participation. It makes perfect sense for Levering to appeal to his Catholic tradition to make this claim, yet in light of Christ's resurrection, surely we have to acknowledge that Christ's presence is now one that sees the risen Christ communicating through his Word in the power of the Spirit to a redeemed people. This still admits to the need for a Christological and Pneumatological metaphysics but also holds firmly to a Creator-creature distinction that refuses to attribute to the text, or the people of God, properties belonging only to God.

Aside from this single reservation, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis* stands out from the ever-growing mass of books on bibliography by offering a cogent pathology of contemporary biblical exegesis, which manages to free itself from the quagmire of hermeneutical theory. Yet it goes beyond the task of diagnosis and, by appealing to Aquinas, illustrates the way exegesis can be done, and indeed has been done, when unencumbered by the conventions of contemporary hermeneutics which have in large part been underwritten by a linear-historical view of reality. This book marks a substantial step forward in the discussion about the nature of the bible and those devoted to reading it.

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Ziel und Ende: Einweisung in die christliche Endzeiterwartung: „Der Herr ist nahe“

Reinhard Slenczka

Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 2008, hb., Euro 39,80, 520 pp., ISBN 978-3-86540-054-3

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das umfangreiche Werk des Erlanger Professors für Systematische Theologie will mehr sein als eine klassische Eschatologie. Es will auf Sterben, Tod und auf die Endzeit vorbereiten. Slenczka, der auch neun Jahre an der Luther-Akademie in Riga (Lettland) unterrichtet hat, geht davon aus, dass es sich bei den neutestamentlichen eschatologischen Aussagen nicht nur um zeitgebundene Vorstellungen handelt. Vielmehr ist von kommenden Ereignissen die Rede, auf die die Bibel vorbereiten will. In Auseinandersetzung mit neueren Entwürfen der Eschatologie und klassischen Konzepten von Unsterblichkeit der Seele und Ewigkeit hat Slenczka sein Buch erarbeitet. Er hat mit seinem seelsorglichen Ansatz und seinen profunden Kenntnissen eine Untersuchung veröffentlicht, die wegen ihres schriftgemäßen Ansatzes in evangelikalen Kreisen weit verbreitet werden sollte.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage de Slenczka, professeur de théologie systématique à Erlangen, se veut plus qu'une eschatologie typique. Il veut aider à se préparer à la fin de vie, à la mort et aux fins dernières. Ce théologien, qui a aussi enseigné pendant neuf ans à l'université Luther de Riga en Lettonie, considère que les affirmations eschatologiques du Nouveau Testament ne se contentent pas d'énoncer des idées liées à leur époque, mais qu'elles visent à préparer le lecteur aux événements à venir. Il présente les approches récentes de l'eschatologie et les théories classiques sur l'immortalité de l'âme humaine et l'éternité. Grâce à son souci pastoral et son profond savoir, et en vertu de son approche biblique, cette étude mérite une large diffusion dans les milieux évangéliques.

SUMMARY

The comprehensive oeuvre of the Erlangen Professor of Systematic Theology intends to represent more than a typical eschatology. It seeks to prepare for dying, death and the eschatological times. Slenczka, who also taught theology for nine years at the Luther-Academy in Riga (Latvia), avows that the eschatological statements of the New Testament do not only embody temporary ideas, but also address future events for which the Bible aims to prepare the reader. Slenczka develops his book by discussing both recent approaches to eschatology and classic theories about the immortality of the soul and eternity. Thanks to his pastoral perspective and profound knowledge, he has published a study which, because of its scriptural approach, deserves extensive circulation in evangelical circles.

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„Eine neue Eschatologie“? – nein, gerade nicht bzw.