

Lawrence's work strongly questions the restrictions that the honour/shame model has placed on biblical studies and pushes for a more sensitive, informed, and open approach using text and cultural studies as one lens to the past. George W. E. Nickelsburg once said of social science criticism, "These theories may serve as useful models that help us to understand ancient texts, but primarily attention must be given to the documents themselves and to their peculiar contours. The model must not become a die that shapes the ancient materials or a filter that highlights or obliterates textual data in a predetermined way" ("Social Aspects of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypticism," *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, 1983, 648). Even though, at several points, Lawrence over-extends the reading of certain texts in order to support her paradigm, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew* presents a formidable and lucid critique of the currently accepted applications of social scientific theory to biblical texts.

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***The Trinity Guide to Eschatology.* By William J. La Due. New York: Continuum, 2004. ISBN 0-8264-1608-X. Pp. ix + 166.**

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The subject of eschatology has received an enormous amount of attention from theologians in recent decades, and there is certainly a need for critical and comparative surveys on the subject. This book by William J. La Due, a Roman Catholic scholar and the author of a number of studies, promises to help fill this need.

La Due's main purpose, as stated in his short introduction, is "to summarise the thought of twenty-one recent Christian theologians in the field, with a view to making their contributions more accessible to theological students and interested adults" (ix). He does this over seven chapters, but wisely begins with a long chapter on the biblical and historical foundations of eschatology. Eschatology is a broad field that includes such topics as the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgement, and the Kingdom of God. La Due, however, seemingly reflecting the traditional Roman Catholic perspective, gives the impression at the outset that eschatology is primarily about "life after death." He gives adequate attention to the New Testament theme of the second coming, but ignores the theme of the Kingdom of God despite the fact that it is central to the synoptic gospels.

The history of eschatology between the biblical era and the twentieth century is neatly sketched out over twenty pages, with a good balance between patristic, Reformation and Enlightenment influences. Chapter Two deals with the representatives of "Classic Protestant Approaches" to eschatology in

the twentieth century. Here we meet Rudolph Bultmann, Oscar Cullmann and Paul Tillich. Chapter Three outlines the contributions of Karl Rahner, Ladislaus Boros and Joseph Ratzinger under the rubric of "Traditional Twentieth-Century Catholic Presentations of Eschatology." The next two chapters are devoted to "complementary" and "contemporary" perspectives in Roman Catholic and Protestant thought. Included here are the thoughts of Hans Küng, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Wolfhart Pannenburg, Jürgen Moltmann and a few others. The book rounds out with two chapters on eschatologies outside the mainstream: those of Macquarrie, Suchocki and Hick, followed by Orthodox, liberationist and feminist voices.

*The Trinity Guide to Eschatology* is a richly detailed survey of modern eschatology with clear, accurate and even-handed descriptions of the contributions of twenty-one theologians. Yet as a guide to eschatology this book disappointed more than it pleased. Although it is highly informative it contains very little actual guidance from a theological perspective. The author rarely goes beyond first level descriptions. There is scarcely a word about the theological premises, principles and purposes that produce such a bewildering variety of eschatologies. Naturally, the strengths and weaknesses of the various eschatologies are not assessed either. In the end, I am afraid, readers will be left with more confusion than guidance in eschatology.

While La Due's examination of the theologians he has chosen is even-handed, he is not so even-handed in his selection of eschatology topics. Far too much attention is given to speculative and remotely relevant topics such as the intermediate state of the soul, purgatory and the extent of salvation. Such attention only serves to reinforce the old image of eschatology as the unimportant appendix of theology where speculation thrives. But the twentieth century was one of the greatest periods for eschatology, for the subject went from being a mere appendix to theology to a vital organ in theology. Protestant theologians in particular, such as ones included in this book, were instrumental in situating eschatology in this vital new role, but La Due barely alludes to this great development in eschatology or to the instrumental part played by Protestant theologians. Astonishingly, he makes only a few scattered references to Karl Barth, the Protestant theologian who, because of his determined effort to reconnect eschatology with Christ, was probably the single greatest influence on modern eschatology.

No guide to modern eschatology would be complete without some recognition of the social and historical factors that shaped the subject. But this book is gravely deficient here too. It may sound like a bit much to ask of a survey book, but there ought to be some mention of the world wars and the spread of communism given the impact which these events had on theologians and theology in general in the twentieth century.

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