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History of paradise: the Garden of Eden in myth and tradition

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are given; but these are so brief as to be, at best, confusing to anyone not already familiar with the field. More seriously, historical questions sometimes get mixed up with the theological message of the text. This is especially evident in the chapter on the united monarchy. One might also wish for a better awareness of the cultural context of the ancient Near East and of recent archaeological work in the region.

Still, pastors and seminarians alike will find this an excellent book to help them discover or re-discover the vitality of the Old Testament and its message. Even people who have not previously studied the Hebrew Bible will find most of the book worthwhile. The style is readable, and relatively free of technical jargon. Bibliographies are rather short and selective, but generally well chosen. It is warmly recommended to all who want to hear the Word.

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History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth & Tradition

Jean Delumeau (Translated by Matthew O'Connell)

Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000

276 pages, \$23.50 Softcover

Flowerbed plaques proclaim "one is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth." Apartment-dwellers seek peace through aromatherapy and gurgling indoor water fountains. The desire for harmony with nature is age-old. Jean Delumeau's study focuses on Western thought with respect to paradise from the early Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, a time when this natural oasis was identified with the Garden of Eden.

Various images of Eden are presented: a patristic re-visioning of the Greco-Roman golden age; an intermediary home for the dead awaiting resurrection, floating in subspace; a luxuriant garden in Asia, Africa, or along the equator, still existing but inaccessible. Much of the text is an exposition of sacred geography, illustrated with reproductions of ancient maps.

By the 17th century, belief in the continued existence of Eden was waning, replaced by feelings of nostalgia for a mythological paradise. However, theologians, both Protestant and Catholic, maintained a lively interest in their first ancestors. Attempts were made to establish authoritatively the exact location of the Garden, now generally thought to have perished in the flood, and a chronology of the days of creation – knowledge considered necessary for understanding the condition of humanity before the fall. Accounts of questions

explored are particularly fascinating: how old were Adam and Eve at creation? how tall were they? what language did they speak? (Hebrew remained the most popular choice, but arguments for other possibilities such as Flemish or Swedish were also put forth).

The Age of Enlightenment brought a sharp decrease in works of literature and exegesis on the Garden of Eden. Geological discoveries and evolutionary thought challenged the "historical" content and veracity of Genesis. The "garden of delights" was largely reduced to a symbol.

During the period under consideration, notions of the earthly paradise and original sin were closely linked in Western theology. Delumeau concludes by citing second-century bishops Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus, who believed Adam and Eve merely impulsive children and that after the first sin the human race set out on a new path leading to incorruptibility. He suggests that the modern world can learn from the story of Eden by drawing upon their insights.

History of Paradise provides a scholarly yet easy-to-read survey of views of Eden which helps place literary and theological texts of earlier times into context. It draws upon a wide range of references, theological, literary, and artistic. Extensive endnotes identify sources consulted, although the addition of a bibliography would have made the book a more useful tool for further research. A personal name index is included, although this is not complete.

The book was first published in French in 1992, and appeared in a hardback English edition in 1995, ably translated by Matthew O'Connell. It constitutes part one of a proposed trilogy, with subsequent volumes to consider millennial expectations and "the hope of perfect and unending joy on our earth in the divine light of the Christian other world" (1). Jean Delumeau, a Roman Catholic historian of religion at the Collège de France in Nantes, is the author of numerous other works, including *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture*.

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The Jesus Movement: A Social History of the First Century

Ekkehard W. and Wolfgang Stegemann

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999

xix + 532 pages, \$45.00 Hardcover

The Jesus Movement by the Stegemann brothers stands as a most welcome contribution to the flowering field of both Jesus studies and the early communities that followed him. When I was working my way toward