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Review of *Quest: The Search for Meaning Through Christ* by Diogenes Allen, Second Edition

Robert B. Slocum
Marquette University

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Flavius Philostratus: Heroikos. Translated with an introduction and notes by Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean and Ellen Bradshaw Aitken. Writings from the Greco-Roman World 1. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001. xcvi + 318 pages. \$39.95 pb.

The first volume of the Society of Biblical Literature's new series "Writings from the Greco-Roman World" presents us with Flavius Philostratus' *Heroikos*, available for the first time in an English translation, supported by notes and an introduction. The average student of the New Testament will, I suspect, like me, have no previous acquaintance with Flavius Philostratus—an Athenian of the late second and early third centuries of our era—beyond his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (a contemporary of Jesus), with perhaps a glance at the *Lives of the Sophists* and the *Letters* attributed to him. The present volume is therefore interesting as a new window both into Philostratus himself and into the "hero-cults" that were one feature of the world into which Christianity was born and in which it flourished. Of course, Christianity itself was not a hero-cult and never became one: entirely different categories were needed for the risen Jesus, who was perceived by his followers from the beginning not as hero but as Son of God, exercising God's prerogatives in mercy and judgment. Nevertheless, with the passage of time Christianity did come to have features reminiscent of the hero-cults, beginning with worship at the tombs of the saints and culminating in worship at the Holy Sepulchre following its discovery by the Empress Helena.

As if all that were not enough, those of us with Sewanee connections may take special pride in this volume, since one of its authors—Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, now assistant professor of New Testament at Harvard Divinity School—is a graduate of our own School of Theology and a member of STR's editorial advisory board.

—Christopher Bryan

Quest: The Search for Meaning Through Christ. By Diogenes Allen. 2nd ed. New York: Church Publishing, 2000. xxx + 119 pages. \$18.95 pb.

Allen explains in his preface to the second edition of this book that *Quest* was prompted by his "long-standing annoyance" with some biblical criticism—extreme liberal, skeptical scholarship; popularizers such as Bishop John Shelby Spong—that perceived "a great chasm" between Jesus as he really was and Jesus as he is worshiped by the church. On the contrary, Allen finds that the "actual situation of New Testament scholarship is neither liberal nor skeptical" and

“highly supportive of the churches’ teaching that Jesus is indeed Lord and Savior” (xi). Granting this “essential continuity” between Jesus’ self-consciousness and what the Gospels say about Jesus, Allen proceeds to engage the question why we should believe in Jesus and follow him (xvi).

In his introduction Allen identifies another problem, and he offers a solution. The problem is that our civilization is “broken in half,” with a split between heart and head (xvii-xviii). Knowing Jesus calls for us to engage our minds and hearts, to determine whether what Jesus did and said satisfies our concern with the “big questions of life” and our concerns about the purpose and significance of our own lives” (xxi). Allen admits that he reads the Gospels with the eyes of faith and the conviction that the Gospels give us access to divine reality. We are to approach the Gospels “asking what God desires to show us about what we are to believe, do, and hope for” (xxviii). In this regard, Allen emphasizes Jesus’ impact on human lives. He notes that “the fundamental reason people in biblical times said that Jesus was the light of the world was that he showed them so much” (xix). For example, Jesus transformed Mary Magdalene into “a wholesome person that everyone could respect,” and his greatness included “his effect on her life, which was there for everyone to see” (xxii).

With these very clear assumptions about Jesus’ identity and significance, Allen embarks on a wide-ranging theological reflection that covers an impressive variety of content in a relatively short volume. Nevertheless, there are recurring theological themes that serve to draw together and integrate the trajectories of Allen’s “search for meaning through Christ.” One such theme is gratitude. Allen recalls that only one of the ten healed lepers returned to thank Jesus. Allen urges that to have faith is to be grateful to God (39). In another chapter of *Quest*, Allen points to Austin Farrer’s frustration with himself when he realized his blindness to the image of Christ in his colleagues and friends, seeing them merely as “claimants, rivals, bores, obstacles, instruments” (7-8). For Farrer, Allen explains, blindness gives way to gratitude and wonder as Farrer sees others and himself “in the light of God’s love” (10). The wonder of God’s gift and blessing can be glimpsed in Farrer’s release from the limitations of his daily attitudes toward others. This wonderful blessing is also glimpsed in the “immense gratitude” of the tax collector Zacchaeus, who gives half his goods to the poor and restores fourfold whatever he has fraudulently taken from anyone (10). Indeed, Allen states, if we take for granted that we belong to ourselves, we are like thieves who take what belongs to others as if it were their own “because we have sought to steal ourselves, robbing God of our lives” (63).

Another significant theme in *Quest* concerns the end, the last things of human life, which Allen considers relative to “East Coker,” the second of T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. Our mortal end is death, the same end faced by our ancestors. Allen calls attention to Eliot’s use of the motto attributed to Mary,

Queen of Scots, "In my beginning is my end." The dominant theme of the first part of "East Coker" is decay, and the dance of the peasants in this poem is a dance of death. Allen notes that East Coker was Eliot's ancestral village, and that "Eliot will become part of the earth, just like his ancestors." But there is another possibility. When the image of God is understood as a principle of our being, Allen urges, "our life has a different end than the earth." Accordingly, Allen finds that the motto of Mary, Queen of Scots, is reversed at the conclusion of "East Coker" by Eliot: "In my end is my beginning." Allen concludes that our end is to realize the image of God, that we make a new beginning whenever we discern what we are to become, and then when we obey Jesus we "reject a life style that leads to death as our ultimate end, and find our rightful place in the ultimate order" (24). Allen returns to this theme relative to "East Coker" in a later chapter, stating that our end is either the earth or receiving the Word of God for life as we share in the uncreated life of God (66-67).

Allen's reflections and themes are scripturally grounded, interestingly illustrated, and effectively applied to real-life issues and concerns. *Quest* is quite readable and will prove accessible as a starting point for discussion in parish adult classes, as well as undergraduate and seminary classes. The paperback second edition of *Quest* is a welcome addition.

—Robert B. Slocum

Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective. By Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002. 195 pages. \$15.99 pb.

This is a most helpful presentation of the state of pneumatology at the present time, uniquely broad in its approach. One must not be put off by what could look like an ideological evangelical slant, given the publisher and Kärkkäinen's appointment at Fuller. As one might suspect from his name, he is part of the revolution in Luther studies coming from the Church of Finland, and indeed the father of that movement, Tuomo Mannermaa, was Kärkkäinen's *Doktorvater* (10). The result is an ability to give a charitable reading of a wide family of pneumatologies from Greek patristic to contemporary pentecostal/charismatic. This approach is most evident in an account of Luther's doctrine of the Spirit that presents the Helsinki insights about Luther's grounding in the Greek Fathers and the location of his doctrine of justification in the context of a process culminating in *theosis*. (See pages 79-87.)

In six chapters Kärkkäinen gives an excellent survey of the discipline, a brief look at biblical perspectives, a short historical summary, an analysis of a variety