

their own conclusions. It's amazing to ponder the energy and ingenuity expended through the ages to calculate what Jesus told us was incalculable. Some numerical schemes have been discredited repeatedly, yet they resurface with regularity to dupe a new generation and give doubters fresh reason to deny the reality of the Second Coming.

While thorough, this book is neither dry nor dull. Still, in a volume this slim, and with more than two thousand years to cover, some topics receive scant attention. While Kyle explores many nonwestern and nonreligious sources for apocalyptic thinking, I would like to have seen him pay more attention to socialism, communism, and modern science as secular millenarian movements.

Every pastor, administrator, and church leader—indeed, every serious believer—would benefit from the perspective and insights this volume contains. The author's light style may be off-putting to some readers, but in my experience they are precisely the people who need to read it most. All of us sorely need Kyle's balanced message. Repeatedly, throughout history, the most violent apocalyptic movements have focused on the Antichrist. "Christians were called then and are called now to focus on Christ, not the signs of the times" (200). If we know Christ, we will recognize him when he comes.

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Lang, Bernhard. *Sacred Games: A History of Christian Worship*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 448 pp. Hardcover, \$40.00.

Referring to Romano Guardini's definition of worship as like "the play of the child and the life of art . . . [with] no purpose but . . . full of profound meaning," Lang, Professor of Religion at the University of Paderborn, Germany, identifies six "sacred games" around which he describes the history of Christian worship. The six chapters of his book follow these six forms of worship.

Praise composed of singing or saying good things about God has the primacy over other forms of worship. Starting with the basic Psalms, but also with a reference to Homer's *Iliad*, the author reviews the tradition of praise from communal poetic recitations in monasteries and convents to the praise form of more modern individual testimonies in Puritan and then Evangelical circles.

Prayer said or sung stems from two historical roots: the regular practice of the community and the occasional meeting at times of crisis. Three questions are here discussed: who is praying? What are the god(s) asked for? How does God answer the prayer? The classic Lord's prayer, "Our Father," is studied phrase by phrase. Its Jewish background is found in the Jewish prayer of the *Amida* (the eighteen benedictions), yet it originates with John the Baptist whom this study assumes to be the author. The discussion on prayer seesaws between focus on Providence, the God who answers or not the prayer, and the human experience of prayer per se.

Sermons expounded on the basis of sacred scriptures are a characteristic and unique feature of Israel in the Mediterranean world. Jews and Christians are thus defined as a "textual community." From Luke the "successful charismatic preacher," through the reformer Luther and the neoorthodox Karl Barth, up to the currents of contemporary liberal Protestantism, the author identifies three great preaching traditions: The one that imparts theological salvation knowledge (the

head); one that advises to make the audience fit for daily life (the hands); and one that emphasizes faith for a better relationship with God (the heart).

Sacrifice defined as "a gift from men" (Plato) implies in return blessings on the faithful. Jesus' sacrifice is interpreted as a failed attempt to reform the animal sacrifices and then as a substitute unbloody sacrifice (wine and bread) outside of the temple. This Eucharistic sacrifice is designed to secure benefits for the Christian. Two sacrificial theologies are developed: one represented by Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine, where the believer includes himself in Christ's sacrifice as an offering to the Father; the other, mostly represented by twentieth-century theologians, where God alone makes the gift in return for Christ's sacrifice.

Sacrament rooted in the primitive religion of magic and superstition belongs to the irrational and emotional world. Against the background of a discussion about the various forms of pagan magic (miracles, witchcraft, and presence of the divine) the history of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist is developed according to three main orientations. In the East (Pseudo-Dionysian) the sacrament is performed as a sacred drama reproducing the event, while in the West the focus is put on the meaning of Christ's sacramental presence, which for Catholics is real in the species in the doctrine of transubstantiation (Thomas Aquinas), while for the reformers (especially Calvin) Christ's presence is only spiritual. In the twentieth century two conflicting trends have been discussed: the "minimalists" who deny any sacramental effect (Karl Rahner), and the mystics who promote a high esoteric world view close to the ancient mystery religions (Teilhard de Chardin).

Ecstasy with its characteristic features (movement, noise, possession) is traced from the ancient world in which Christianity originated (Dionysian cults) to modern Pentecostalism. Two possible developments have marked the history of the practice of ecstasy in Christian worship. If the ecstatic form was appreciated it became a regular and well-controlled form; if it was regarded as suspicious the ritual would then take a more intellectualized form.

The book concludes with the observation of the two mental attitudes which govern behavior in the Christian worship. One view likes to emphasize the majestic, distant and transcendent God. The other prefers to think of God as a friendly person and a closer God. The worship experience follows therefore the inclinations, the cultures, the history and even the esthetic sensitivities of people. In that respect, worship "is deeply human and embraces all the dimensions of the human soul" (444).

Two main critiques are in order: the author is mostly indebted to the *Religionsgeschichte* approach and finds his "interpretive keys" in pre-Christian rituals and ancient Neoplatonic literature as well as in popular culture. As a result he omits altogether to identify the specific genius of Christian worship, namely, the particular events which inspired biblical rituals, such as Creation and the Exodus for Israel, the incarnation of Christ and his resurrection for the Christian church. If indeed worship is to be defined as "meaningful human action oriented toward the divine" (1), it must first of all be rooted in an action, namely, in the particular history of this religious movement. Worship is not just "a communal celebration"; it is also a remembrance of the common root which generated it and the affirmation of the common hope which sustains it. The author contents himself to describing the various trends of the rituals and rarely dares to risk to suggest a direction of thought or at least a lesson from this tantalizing history. Even when he concludes and notes the two trends of worship mind-sets, the

author does not transcend his observation with a reflection of his own. He could have suggested, for instance, that a true worship experience may carry both perceptions of God together without excluding each other. For the sake of clarity, the author may not have realized that several of these forms of worship could live together in the same person or group in harmony, if not in tension.

It remains that the study is worth reading. It is comprehensive and covers the history of worship not only with the description of its rituals but also with a fine analysis of their respective meanings. The author has successfully portrayed a very complex picture in a clear and interesting presentation. Well illustrated and written in a limpid language with an abundant bibliography, this is a useful tool for students of church history, but also for any person intrigued by the mysterious games played behind the experiences of Christian worship.

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Marshall, I. Howard, and David Peterson, eds. *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. 640 pp. Paperback, \$45.00.

The contributors to this volume of twenty-five essays could be broadly categorized as moderate evangelicals. They are Stephen Barton, Hans Bayer, Craig Blomberg, Brad Blue, Darrell Bock, Peter Bolt, Doug Buckwalter, Brian Capper, Andrew Clark, Joel Green, G. Walter Hansen, I. Howard Marshall, Heinz-Werner Neudorfer, John Nolland, David Peterson, Brian Rapske, Brian Rosner, David Seccombe, John Squires, Christoph Stenschke, Philip Towner, Max Turner, Robert Wall, and Ben Witherington III.

The volume is not a unified and complete account of the theology of Acts. Rather, it contains essays on aspects of the study of the theology of that NT book. The book's strength is in accomplishing what it purports to do. I. Howard Marshall in the Introduction sets the scene for the rest of the volume: "The theological center of Acts lies in God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, the task of proclaiming it, and the nature of the new people of God empowered by the Holy Spirit" (3).

The essays are organized in three main sections which form the core of the book: The first, "Salvation of God," discusses the divine provision of salvation. The second, "The Call of God," tells the story of how the message of salvation was made known to both Jew and Gentile. The third, "The Renewing Work of God," studies the character and experience of God's saved people. These are followed by a concluding chapter that integrates the theological themes and affirms the place of salvation in Luke's theology.

Most of the contributors seem to recognize that theology is Luke's driving force, without denying its historicity. This I appreciate. Furthermore, they have been willing to discuss theological categories that are not part of traditional systematic categories, but are part and parcel of Luke's theological framework. These include issues of liturgy, missiology, and persecution.

The authors utilize, with varying degrees of recognition, recent and seminal critical scholarship. However, as can be expected, for the most part serious issue is taken with such scholarship. But honest efforts are made to interact with the wide world of Lukan studies.