



when we look at Revelation. The structural and theological insights generally cohere. But I am more comfortable with Bauckham's sympathetic and positive approach to John's rhetoric, and I believe that there are academic advantages to such an approach.

Recent studies of human perception suggest that it is impossible to treat any document fairly unless you can generate some sympathy for the author's perspective. The best reading of a text will arise out of a kind of soul communion with the world of the author. We live at a time when skepticism and disbelief are increasingly called into question. A reading of the Apocalypse that is sympathetic to the faith and basic honesty of the original author's presentation should no longer be considered out of harmony with good scholarship.

In offering this concern about the approach of Fiorenza's book, I do not intend to diminish her achievement or disparage her character. I am simply answering her call for scholars to be honest about the stance from which they prefer to read the text. Her book opens the way for more honest and authentic discussion of the personal and spiritual dynamics that affect academic readings of the biblical texts. She herself has practiced what she preaches in this book. All readers and critics of her book would do well to follow her example.

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Grenz, Stanley J. *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992. 239 pp. Paperback, \$12.99.

In a bid to lead readers through the bewildering maze of evangelical views of the millennium, Stanley J. Grenz, Professor of Theology and Ethics at Carey/Regent College, calls for an appreciation of each of the major perspectives: postmillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, historic premillennialism and amillennialism. He describes his own understanding as "amillennialism sympathetic to postmillennialism."

The author provides a fresh, readable survey of millenarianism in Christian history and accents the tragic results that have sometimes followed on millennial thought gone awry. (One wonders, though, whether William Miller's misjudgment with regard to October 22, 1844, was "catastrophic" in the same sense that that adjective is deserved by, say, Thomas Münster's millennial thought. Succeeding chapters examine the main features, biblical bases, and criticisms of each view.

Postmillennialism is described as "probably the most maligned and misunderstood" position. Attention is focused on a modern iteration, "Evangelical Postmillennialism," which features a belief in a future era that begins imperceptibly, may last more than a literal one thousand years, and during which the gospel is proclaimed. The view finds in Rev 19:11-21 a presentation of church-age conquest. It provides a reminder that God's reign is

in some sense a present one and lends a buoyant optimism concerning the spread of the gospel.

"Classical dispensationalism" has been joined by a younger, academically-centered "progressive dispensationalism" which has taken seriously the criticisms of the older form. Both forms reject the thought that the church is the "New Israel" and see the tribulation and millennium as centered on God's program for national Israel. Modifications in dispensational thought, represented by the "progressive" variety, have produced problems of internal consistency and Grenz wonders whether "it simply may not be possible to construct a separate theological understanding for Israel that does not detract from the primacy of the church" (124).

Advocates of "historic premillennialism" believe that the present age will conclude with a time of tribulation ended by the second coming of Christ, an event which serves as cataclysmic introduction to a millennium of peace and righteousness on earth. The position "spiritualizes" Old Testament prophecies with regard to Israel but applies a "literal" hermeneutic to the two resurrections of Rev 20:4-6. Grenz claims historic premillennialists fail to live up to the title in that they advocate a futuristic rather than a historical interpretation of the Apocalypse. The view underlines the point that eschatological blessings are divine ones and so warns against triumphalism.

Amillennialism denies a future earthly millennium as an interregnum before the final establishment of God's kingdom and holds, instead, that the present era will be followed by the eternal Kingdom of God. There is only one resurrection of humankind. Revelation 20 presents the church age during which Satan is bound or the reign of the saints in heaven during the "intermediate state."

Two themes conclude the monograph. First, the "three basic alternatives" harbor three corresponding "moods": optimism (postmillennialism); pessimism (premillennialism); realism (amillennialism). The author applauds the way amillennialism combines the "moods" of the other two. Second, true Christian eschatology focuses less on the chronology of future events than on providing insight with regard to the present age. The author's own evaluations of millennialist positions emphasize the values of optimism and activism during this era.

This informative volume has its flaws. The pattern of the evaluative chapters introduces a considerable degree of repetition. And despite the expressed importance of Revelation 20, the book fails to provide any extended exegetical treatment of the chapter. For such attention the reader may wish to consult the recent attempt by J. Webb Mealy (*After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20* (Sheffield: JOST, 1992). More broadly, Grenz's overtures toward alternative viewpoints may be judged somewhat feigned as he tends to affirm in each perspective that which concurs with his own amillennialism. That the author's eclectic solution for evangelicalism's millennial fragmentation matches so closely his own theological odyssey (see the preface) will give the reader pause.

For a genre which requires a high concentration of technical terms, the book is written clearly and provides a substantive survey of both the perspectives themselves and the major criticisms offered of them. It deserves a thoughtful readership and will prove useful as an ancillary text in college and seminary classrooms. A final evaluation will turn on whether the reader believes Grenz has found his way out of the millennial maze or is, in fact, still caught in it.

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Grenz, Stanley J., and Roger E. Olson. *20th-century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992. 393 pp. Cloth, \$27.99. Paper, \$18.99.

For the greater part, evangelical theologians have pursued their craft within the evangelical circle using methods and sources congenial within the fellowship. To be sure, one thinks of the apologetic stance of Bernard Ramm and more recently of Clark Pinnock and a few others who have essayed forth to directly engage modern thinkers outside the evangelical camp, but such are relatively few. A study of the major thinkers and contours of post-enlightenment theology of the proportion and style of *20th-Century Theology* is without precedent in American evangelicalism.

One thinks of several possible models for this study. Perhaps Karl Barth's *Die Protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert* of fifty years ago is one such—both are penetrating and fair and, in a sense, friendly studies of "big-person" representatives of theological positions. Or going further back, H. R. Mackintosh's *Types of Modern Theology* or, more recently, John Macquarrie's *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought* may have been influential. There are some parallels in all of these in that they cover some of the same thinkers and they all trace patterns of thought from one era to the next. But these similarities become surface phenomena when one penetrates the substance and intent of Grenz and Olson's work. As the subtitle "God and the World" implies, the single organizing principle and criterion of judgment running through every page of this volume is that of God's relationship to the world—the tension in theological thought between divine transcendence and immanence.

It is the thesis of the book that a balance must be maintained. An overemphasis on transcendence leads to a conceptualization of God as being so far removed from this world as to be irrelevant to the experience of human beings. On the other hand, an exaggerated over-emphasis upon immanence may lead to a theology that is subservient to human culture and in which God is reduced to the limits of human thought. In the authors' opinion a balance was maintained in classical theological systems; they affirm in the penultimate chapter, "Reaffirming the Balance," that evangelical theology has gone a long way toward restoring this balance by its return to a biblically based theology. The subthesis of the book could perhaps be that the procrustean and rapid