

Diplomacy: 1500-1650" (pp. 327-368). A section devoted to brief data on "The Contributors" (pp. 369-370) will alert the reader to the fact that each of these authors is an accomplished scholar and productive writer.

The vast amount of material presented in this book is not readily apparent from page count alone. In fact, when the volume is in hand, one notes the rather small type face used and the "crowded" or small margins— aspects of the publication which may be somewhat dismaying to the reader. But in spite of these somewhat negative mechanical matters, the reader cannot help but recognize the usefulness of this volume. It is indeed a valuable treasure-house of factual material and competent scholarly interpretation. And although *The Meaning of the Renaissance and Reformation* apparently was not intended as a textbook, it could readily serve as such— especially for the advanced student.

*Meaning* lies at the heart of the various essays, as the book's title suggests. This fact enhances the publication's value and adds to the fascination provided by its subject matter.

One may not agree, of course, with every point of view expressed by each author. The present reviewer, for example, would take issue with Margaret Aston's somewhat negative evaluation of the attitude of the Brethren of the Common Life toward scholarship and teaching (see pp. 83-84), an evaluation which has evidently been influenced by the monumental work of the late R. R. Post, *The Modern Devotion* (Leiden, 1968). For the reviewer's assessment of Post's book, see *AUSS* 8 (1970): 65-76. On the whole, however, Aston's chapter is an outstanding one, particularly for putting into perspective the multifarious aspects and complexities of the "Northern Renaissance."

Indeed, each author represented in this symposium has succeeded rather well, in my opinion, in presenting data and delineating trends in such a way as to highlight major features of Renaissance and Reformation. Interrelationships are aptly indicated, and major developments are brought together in a manner which reveals a sort of unity and cohesiveness underlying the diversity of events and movements characterizing the period.

The value of this volume is enhanced by the inclusion of annotated bibliographies at the end of each chapter and by an index at the end of the book (pp. 371-385). Maps of Europe in 1350 and in 1648 appear on unnumbered pages x and xi; and the page immediately preceding (and facing) the beginning of each chapter in the volume is devoted to photographic reproductions of engravings, woodcuts, or other items of interest from the era.

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Eller, Vernard. *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible: Making Sense Out of Revelation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974. 214 pp. Paperback, \$3.95.

Eller's publication is not a commentary on the book of Revelation in the usual sense, although the author does work his way through the Revelation

section by section. His concepts are usually stimulating, and his style of writing provides easy and pleasurable reading. His chief working principle is to discover how the Revelation reveals Jesus Christ; and he strongly opposes the concept of "calendarizing" the Apocalypse, of nailing down "the Revelator's picture" to "an historical when, where, and how," a procedure he feels is currently in a surge among contemporary scholars, but which has always proved "dead wrong" (p. 13).

His own sort of approach certainly gains in some ways, but there is some question as to whether it does not lose in others. After all, the Revelation, according to its own statement in 1:19, does have to do with both "things that are" and "things that shall be hereafter"; and if this Apocalypse is at all similar to other apocalyptic writings (as we assume it is), we would expect that it would give some attention to historical events and to historical progression. Nevertheless, Eller provides a corrective to much of the nonsense which has too frequently appeared in the writings of the so-called "calendarizers," and he brings to the forefront an aspect of the book which has far too often been neglected.

A two-page diagram beginning on the inside front cover of Eller's publication and carrying over onto the first page of the book suggests that his approach is futurist (in spite of his opposition to "calendarizing"!), but his comments throughout the volume usually do not betray this stance to any marked degree. He has, in fact, been quite successful in presenting the message in the book of Revelation in a "non-calendarizing" way. In this regard one is reminded of the work of Matthias Rissi, to which Eller acknowledges his indebtedness.

In his treatment of the horsemen of the Apocalypse, I would suggest that Eller is in error in seeing them as representing the antichrist. The basic meaning of the whole sequence of seals would seem to preclude this interpretation, as would reference to the background symbolisms in Ezekiel and Zechariah. Although he has recognized the relationship of the four living creatures in Rev 4-5 to those in a similar picture in Ezekiel, he has failed to see the continuing close relationship in connection with such matters as the "four sore punishments" (see Ezek 14:21) and the sealing work (see Ezek 9).

In his efforts to decalendarize, he finds it necessary to reject Rev 13:18 and 17:9-17 as later additions to the Apocalypse. One wonders, in this regard, whether Eller has not permitted his own concept of "decalendarizing" to be the guiding factor in his reconstruction of the text.

One further questionable matter may be noted here: his interpretation of the "second resurrection" implied in Rev 20:5. Both in his discussion and in a diagram on p. 188, he suggests that this is an escape from the "lake of fire" (or from a so-called "second-order death") into eternal life; and thus he puts forth the idea of an eventual universal salvation as involved for all mankind. He bases his interpretation on Rev 21:24-27, pointing out (among other things) that the *open gates* of the new Jerusalem must signify incoming traffic and that this traffic could only come from those people who are in the lake of fire! Surely, such an application of this imagery misses completely the basic thought of the passage, which depicts the glorious security and freedom of God's people. It injects an extraneous thought; and, moreover, it takes the "second resurrection" out of its context in Rev 20. In that chapter, the

clear implication is that at the end of the millennium the wicked are raised to physical life, in contrast to the "blessed and holy" ones who experienced "the first resurrection" at the beginning of the millennium. (As a matter of added interest, it appears that in this particular segment of his interpretation, Eller has suddenly "calendarized" in spite of his rather persistent attempt throughout his volume to avoid doing so!)

The foregoing several examples are not the only items with which this reviewer would take exception. Nevertheless, in spite of various misgivings, I would recommend Eller's work as an eminently readable and thought-provoking work, whose basic point of view adds a fresh breath to the study of an important and intriguing NT book.

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Feiner, Johannes, and Vischer, Lukas, eds. *The Common Catechism: A Book of Christian Faith*. Trans. by David Bourke, et al. New York: Seabury, 1975. xxv + 690 pp. \$10.95.

The publication of this massive work ushers in a new era in ecumenical work. Ten years after the Dutch Catechism it offers the first comprehensive and systematic treatise on the Christian religion produced jointly by Catholic and Protestant theologians since the 16th-century Reformation.

This is no question-and-answer pamphlet like the old Baltimore Catechism, but a 690-page treatment of the essentials of the Christian faith by a team of 36 scholars, edited jointly by Johannes Feiner of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and Lukas Vischer, Director of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The contributors, Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist theologians from Germany, France and Switzerland, include such names as Grillmeier, Pannenberg, Laurentin and Lehmann.

The book moves down a very narrow path, seeking not to favor either tradition over the other. It is divided into five parts. Part One is devoted to the question of God as it presents itself to our contemporaries (pp. 1-89). This section is really only preliminary to the subsequent part "God in Jesus Christ" (pp. 91-275). Jesus Christ "in his work and in his person" is today's answer to the God question. Biblical criticism receives due attention, and the Christology of Chalcedon is vindicated. Part Three, on "The New Man" (pp. 277-395), discusses the effects of Christ's death and resurrection on the modern Christian, more particularly on life we share in the community of the faithful. This is followed by an important section on "Faith and the World" (pp. 397-550) striking out into the realm of Christian ethics, both in general terms (conscience and law, freedom and authority) and in very specific questions (religious freedom, sexuality, ecology, war and peace).

The final part of the book deals frankly and carefully with the doctrinal issues that still divide Protestants and Roman Catholics (pp. 551-666). This, it is emphasized, "is in no way a kind of appendix on a subsidiary subject" (p. 552). The questions singled out are Scripture and tradition, grace and work, the sacraments, marriage, Mary, and finally the church, with special