

had visions of them during the mystery rites." In combatting this philosophy the author lays his theological foundation by quoting a Christian hymn (1:15-20). Lohse denies a pre-Christian origin to the hymn.

I would certainly agree with Lohse when he states that "in the context of Col, however, the command to keep festival, new moon, and sabbath is not based on the Torah according to which Israel received the Sabbath as a sign of her election from among the nations. Rather the sacred days must be kept for the sake of 'the elements of the universe,' who direct the course of the stars and thus also prescribe minutely the order of the calendar" (p. 115). As Lohse succinctly states it, "the 'philosophy' made use of terms which stemmed from Jewish tradition, but which had been transformed in the crucible of syncretism to be subject to the service of 'the elements of the universe'" (p. 116). Thus the "philosophy," which included a set cultus, and which propagandists were introducing at Colossae, may best be described as "pre-Gnostic" (p. 129).

Lohse does not think that Paul wrote the Epistle. As he sees it, Colossians is the best argument for the existence of a "Pauline school tradition" which, most probably, was centered at Ephesus. The recipient of this letter most likely lived in Colossae. But the letter is really addressed to Christians in Asia Minor (Colossae had been destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60-61) in order to help them cope with the "menace of syncretism" (p. 181). The appeal of syncretism was based on the fear that the forgiveness of sins attained by Christians at baptism did not quite free them from the power of fate.

Only 22 pages are devoted to Philemon. Here the interpretation is rather straightforward and traditional. However, Lohse feels that Paul wrote the letter in the mid-fifties while he was a prisoner at Ephesus where he met the runaway slave, Onesimus. In writing to Philemon, Paul is not arguing that Philemon should free Onesimus so that he might come back to serve Paul. A classical parallel is provided by Pliny the Younger's letter to his friend Sabinianus on behalf of one of the latter's slaves who had run away. But whereas Pliny appealed to his friend's respect for the Stoic virtue of clemency, Paul's appeal is based on their common existence in Christ, and Philemon's knowledge of Christian love.

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McClendon, James Wm., Jr. *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*. Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1974. 224 pp. \$13.95; paperback, \$4.95.

The author proposes in this book to do theology based on biographies rather than the study of God. People's lives are based on the convictions they hold in common with the community of which they are a part. The study of Christian beliefs can be more directly and authentically studied by concerning ourselves with lived lives. In studying lives, one needs to observe what are the dominant or controlling images found in these lives. These

images derived from the Bible are based on the concept of God and man as meeting.

McClendon uses the biographies of Dag Hammarskjöld and Martin Luther King to develop his thesis. Hammarskjöld saw himself as Christ's brother and envisaged his life as a sacrifice to be offered, while King saw himself as a Moses leading his people on the Exodus to the Promised Land of freedom. What is significant here is that men having biblical faith derive their images from Scripture but apply them to themselves. They thus show not only what religion is—the application of certain great archetypal images to their own lives and circumstances—but also its content. The author uses as an illustration the doctrine of atonement. There is no formal interest concerning this doctrine on the part of Hammarskjöld and King, but yet for them it was central, since both sought to bring about unity—the former of nations, the latter of races and classes.

McClendon does not repudiate propositional theology, but he insists that the propositional statement be in continual and intimate contact with lived experience; otherwise it becomes merely an objective study. "With this living contact, theology may develop its propositions in the confidence that their meaning is exemplified in contemporary Christian experience" (p. 178).

This book has many insights and provokes one to think along fresh lines, but somehow it seems to the reviewer that McClendon has not yet put everything together quite properly or sufficiently. Interesting ideas are set forth, but they are not fully explored. What is said in one place is not fully complemented by what is said later. For example, the author emphasizes the individual within the community, but this relationship is not clearly explained. The relationship between images and conviction also needs clarification. Also, it is difficult to understand why the biographies themselves are separated by a chapter entitled "Biography as Theology."

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MacPherson, Dave. *The Late Great Pre-Trib Rapture*. Kansas City, Mo.: Heart of America Bible Society, 1974. 88 pp. Paperback.

The main reason to review this book in *AUSS* is that in a sense it is a follow-up of the author's *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin*, which I reviewed in *AUSS* 13 (1975): 86-87. (Of itself this new book can hardly rank as significant historical or theological literature, though it may have some practical value for seminarians and pastors, as will be indicated below.)

MacPherson's earlier volume is basically an historical treatment (written in a free journalistic style) and provides significant information and insights regarding some of the charismatic activity in Great Britain, especially south-western Scotland, in the early nineteenth century. But it fails, in my opinion, to prove its main thesis: that John Nelson Darby acquired his "secret-rapture" concept as a result of a vision of a young girl, Margaret Macdonald, in Scotland in early 1830—a thesis which I have subjected to careful scrutiny in my earlier review. (The rise of the "secret-rapture" idea