

tradition, he continues to defend a high view of the church and the sacraments in the Gospel. But this effort has failed to convince this reviewer that the Johannine community spoke a language that was understood by the apostolic church and was never too distant from it at any point in its history. I fail to see the logic that wishes to claim chronological validity for the story when read autobiographically, if clearly the same cannot be claimed for the story when read for the life of Jesus. Neither am I convinced that the history of the community flows smoothly into a "Johannine school of writers" who produced both the Gospel and the Epistles. Brown's repeated pointing to the Presbyter's appeal to "what was from the beginning" does not solve the problematical relation of the Gospel to the Epistles, relative to both their content and their sequence, and his appeal to the Epistles in order to solve a problem that affects only the Gospel is a *tour de force* that fails. His problem is to explain how a Gospel that was all along so close to apostolic Christianity is practically ignored by Ignatius and becomes, according to his own reconstruction, the "catalyst" for second-century gnostic Christianity. He points to the secessionist opponents of the Presbyter as the culprits, but the Fourth Gospel's being at first more influential among the heterodox than the orthodox of the second century is a fact that seems to be better explained by recognizing that it saw the light of day among Christians who were in the first century alienated from the apostolic mainstream.

Brown's effort to provide in such few pages a comprehensive picture with a wealth of detailed twists and turns will be hard to equal. Even if one disagrees with some of the major positions taken by him, one cannot fail to admire his command of the material he is handling; and whether or not one is convinced by his arguments, one cannot fail to learn from him. Whether Brown will prove 60% correct, as he hoped, it is too soon to tell. In fact, I have no idea how this could ever be assessed.

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Davidson, James West. *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977. xii + 308 pp. \$17.50.

To most people of the twentieth century, the interests, concerns, and way of thinking of those of the eighteenth century are difficult to comprehend. It is Davidson's purpose to discover for the reader the elements that made up the logic of that time—a logic that was based on concepts of the millennium of Rev 20 and especially on an understanding of the history of redemption leading up to the millennium.

Davidson has studied diaries, books, manuscripts, pamphlets, and especially printed sermons from the eighteenth century, particularly in relationship to some of the prominent events of that time—two earthquakes, the Great Awakening, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution. It has been his effort to discover what interpretation was given to these events and thus to deduce the underlying logic of the thought of the individuals involved.

Some of the important questions he has raised are: What are the elements that made up the millennial logic? Was there more than one millennial logic; i.e., were the New Englanders united in a basically common logic, or were there distinctive elements which divided them into opposing camps? Was there a basic continuity in that era, or was there a discontinuity, a shifting from one millennial logic to another? And, did the New Englanders' millennial interpretations merely function as "Rorschach inkblots," reflecting their social concerns, or did their eschatology actually influence their perception of their social situation, disposing them to act in certain consistent ways? The study proceeds to find the answers to these questions, progressing thematically (and also more or less chronologically). The first half of the book seeks to discover the logic, and the second half examines some of the ramifications of the logic.

The first chapter, "Revelation," begins with a summary of the contents of the NT book of Revelation and then shows how pervasive the influence of this book was in the lives of eighteenth-century New Englanders. Davidson reviews the approaches that other historians have taken and closes the chapter by challenging the categories that have generally been proposed (of the social and personal characteristics of premillennialists and postmillennialists) as being a little too neat. These categories have appeal because they seem to make sense. But the more important questions are, Do they really fit the logic of *that* time, and do they coincide with what actually took place?

In chap. 2, Davidson examines New Englanders' understanding of the *chronology* given in prophecy. His purpose is to see whether this might provide the key elements basic to a common logic. However, he finds that despite some standardization of principles of interpretation, there was no standardized view on chronology in either Old or New England. And in fact, there were not two separate "logics" distinguishing premillennialists and postmillennialists; rather, there was a broad spectrum of opinions. But the lack of consensus on chronology, although the point of much discussion, was not considered by the New Englanders themselves to be of central importance.

Chap. 3 continues the search for the distinctive elements by investigating attitudes toward mechanisms of the church's salvation—i.e., ways and means God uses to act in history. Davidson compares the literal and

“spiritual” approaches to interpretations of prophecies of catastrophe, the understandings of ordinary and extraordinary providences, and the inclinations of some to look for unfulfilled prophecies to be fulfilled by natural catastrophes while others expected humanly instigated fulfillments. He does not find these differences to provide the structural elements of the New Englanders’ millennial logic, but nevertheless does find here an understanding important to his ultimate goal. New Englanders believed God used calamity not only to punish but also, in his mercy, to arouse his people and call them to him. “So long as New Englanders regarded judgment as an inseparable part of salvation, they would continue to combine hopeful rhetoric with the gloom of both natural and moral calamities” (p. 121).

Davidson finds the key to understanding millennial logic in the pattern of conversion. Individual salvation came, not through gradual enlightenment, but through judgment which brought conviction and then the new birth. This pattern was generally accepted. And what applied on the small scale applied on the larger scale also. “The idea of salvation through trial and conviction . . . [was] the basic pattern God used to bring deliverance” (p. 136). But as in individual cases, it was not simply a matter of despair followed by hope. The two must be mingled in proper balance until deliverance came. “The salvation of the church would come as the tempo of both reward and affliction increased, until a dramatic resolution was achieved in the millennial state” (p. 138). Millennialists expressed this by saying that “evil, instead of diminishing as goodness spread, would become more persistent in its opposition” (p. 139). Here, and not in chronology, was the unity in New England’s millennialism.

Davidson sees this millennial logic as producing the very results it expected. The Great Awakening, for instance, was hindered both by those on the outside who opposed it and by those within who went to extremes. It was easy to see these people (however sincere they might have been) as part of Satan’s opposition, part of the affliction necessary and to be expected. The resulting polarization was a product of the underlying logic, and pushed “moderates toward antagonistic positions” (p. 171). “The millennial dream, then, both made and unmade the hopes of those who welcomed the Awakening” (p. 175). It “made them” because it explained (and even predicted) the turmoil and opposition. It “unmade them” in that it brought polarization, rather than the unity and peace for which these adherents looked.

The last three chapters of the book seek application of this logic in order to reveal its workings. The polarization described is revealed in the attitudes toward the matters of evil, the sovereignty of God, and man’s free will. Davidson describes the agreements and differences of the Arminian Liberals and the Calvinistic “New Lights.” They saw the same pattern in

all of history that they recognized in eschatology. God was able to bring good out of evil—to use evil for advantage (the disagreement was on how far to go with this reasoning). Davidson substantiates his position by pointing out the interpretation given by the New Englanders to the events of the French and Indian War of the 1750s—an interpretation clearly molded by the pattern he has presented. He closes chap. 5 by stating that the New Englanders “used the prophecies to defend an omnipotent and benevolent God in a world filled with the power and malevolence of the wicked. The millennium may have held out a future where it would be possible to attain the perfection of man; but more important, it did so in a way that provided a present where it would be possible to maintain the perfection of God” (p. 212).

And what of prophetic interpretation and the American Revolution? Davidson agrees with Bernard Bailyn that millennial thought was not an important factor in precipitating the Revolution. The millennium was pictured as the triumph of Christ’s kingdom, not as a utopia of social perfection. Individual conversion was a return to the governing of natural facilities by a spiritual principle. So in society it would be the “inward, spiritual principle” which would be the “key force . . . [to] set aright the already existing structures” (p. 218). Millennial thought, then, was basically apolitical. And liberal thinking was similar to that of the New Lights in this. Davidson does include a comparison/contrast of millennial and Revolutionary perspectives on a number of key points here, and indicates that although differing, these perspectives were not necessarily contradictory and could even be complementary.

While the millennial viewpoint was not so influential on the Revolution, the Revolution did have its impact on millennial thought. Some shifting must be made in the cast of characters, some revision of the history of redemption. Antichrist could no longer simply be identified with nations with Catholic populations, for England was now the foe and France an ally. And America was shifted from a supportive role (with Britain as the “elect nation”) to being the locus of the coming kingdom. The basic pattern—that of deliverance through affliction—remained.

The final chapter of the book examines the direction millennial logic took in the 1790s and beyond, both in its progressing thought (i.e., theology) and in its social impact. Elements of the postmillennialism of the nineteenth century had existed throughout the eighteenth century—and in as influential a figure as Jonathan Edwards. Postmillennialism came, not as some new system or because of a new discovery in the prophecies, but rather as “the synthesis of several long-familiar tenets into a coherent view of history” (p. 262).

Both premillennialists and postmillennialists were concerned about psychologies of motivation, each fearing that the other’s theology would

be detrimental to proper action, the former seen as leading to fear and a desire to postpone the Second Coming of Christ because of the preceding "time of trouble," and the latter seen as leading to complacency. Davidson reiterates the point made earlier that often what one side "thinks its opponent ought logically to believe is not always what the opponent ends up believing. . . . Men who reject a particular doctrine are always willing to draw out of it consequences which its adherents never wished to embrace" (p. 94).

Also in his final chapter, Davidson examines the thinking of the 1790s on the three elements dealt with in the first half of the book. On *chronology*, the 1790s saw the conviction grow that the 1260 days were about to end, indeed were ending. "The *conversion*-oriented pattern of redemption tended to assume that history's climax would be attended not merely by resistance but concerted resistance" (p. 286, emphasis mine), which was viewed in terms of conspiracy (the Bavarian Illuminati) and consciously evil motives on the part of the "enemy." Catastrophes were seen to serve to chastise the wicked and/or sanctify the elect. *Judgment* was both present and future (final), with the difference between the two relative rather than absolute. With the sense of imminence which the chronology brought and the polarization resulting from the conversion model, there was a tendency to bring the end-time judgment into the present. In a sense, the millennial logic brought this about as it meant vindication and reward to the righteous and retribution to the wicked on this earth rather than in an other-worldly heaven and hell.

Overall, Davidson's book gives evidence of careful thought and scholarship, and the author appears to have gained a good grasp of the eschatological thought of eighteenth-century New Englanders. Moreover, his style of writing is such that the book makes interesting reading, as well.

Davidson's honest and open-minded approach is evidenced in the fact that the viewpoint he presents in this book (namely, that the millennial logic of the New Englanders had an actual influence on their thoughts and actions, rather than being a mere reflection of their social concerns) is a reversal in his position from one previously published (see p. 256, n. 1). This reviewer has appreciated his methodology in postulating hypotheses, testing them (by research in the materials), and postulating new ones until a satisfactory solution was found. The book is written in such a way as to reveal this process, thus not only giving the conclusion to which Davidson has come, but also presenting the false leads and showing their true role in that time.

There are two questions, however, which seem to me to have received inadequate attention. First, from where did the premillennialists come, and what role did they play? Davidson could probably have dealt a bit

more fully with this. Second, with respect to the polarization Davidson has noted, I wonder whether he has adequately demonstrated that that polarization was *caused* by the rhetoric and millennial logic of the Great Awakening? Did he perhaps, in reading that rhetoric, feel that it was strong enough to have caused a polarization, and then, also finding evidence of a polarization, could he simply have assumed a causative link between the two? Might it not be just as likely that this polarization had indeed *already* existed in the Arminian-Calvinistic "split," merely to be made more evident through the arguments precipitated in conjunction with the events of that latter time? In any case, some further direct evidence from the primary sources on this matter would have been helpful. Despite questions such as these, however, I would reiterate my overall evaluation of this book as both readable and informative.

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DeMolen, Richard L., ed., *Essays on the Works of Erasmus*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978. vii + 282 pp. \$18.50.

Richard L. DeMolen of the Folger Shakespeare Library is to be congratulated on putting together another excellent volume on Erasmus, consisting of fourteen chapters by outstanding experts. His own compendious Introduction, "*Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi: Rungs on the Ladder to the Philosophia Christi*" (pp. 1-50), provides background and context for the studies that follow. Unfortunately, the very scope of this excellent production precludes the possibility of little more than a listing of the chapters, with their authors and titles: chap. 1, "Ways with Adages" by Margaret Mann Phillips (pp. 51-60); chap. 2, "The Principal Theological Thoughts in the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*," by Ernst-W. Kohls (pp. 61-82); chap. 3, "The Logic and Rhetoric of Proverbs in Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*," by Clarence H. Miller (pp. 83-98); chap. 4, "The *De Copia: The Bounteous Horn*," by Virginia W. Callahan (pp. 99-109); chap. 5, "*Apologiae: Erasmus's Defenses of Folly*," by Myron P. Gilmore (pp. 111-123); chap. 6, "Erasmus's Annotations and Colet's Commentaries on Paul: A Comparison of Some Theological Themes," by Catherine A. L. Jarrott (pp. 125-144); chap. 7, "Erasmus's *Paraphrases of the New Testament*," by Albert Rabil, Jr. (pp. 145-161); chap. 8, "As Bones to the Body: The Scope of *Inventio* in the *Colloquies* of Erasmus," by M. Geraldine Thompson, C.S.J. (pp. 163-178); chap. 9, "The *Ratio Verae Theologiae* (1518)," by Georges G. Chantraine, S.J. (pp. 179-185); chap. 10, "*De Libero Arbitrio* (1524): Erasmus on Piety, Theology, and the Lutheran Dogma," by B. A. Gerrish (pp. 187-209); chap. 11, "Erasmus's *Ciceronianus: A Comical Col-*