

reasoning is completely obscured on p. 17 by two sentences on lines 24-26 which occur again, this time rightly, on lines 32-34. And one wonders whether the computer upon which, the author tells us, the book was composed, edited, and typeset is responsible for the use of "who" instead of "whom" (p. 17) and for such words as "imminentness" (p. 17), "thusly" (p. 50) and "signators" (p. 74), as well as for such phrases as "Zapolya . . . had a falling out with Suleiman" (p. 102). Again, while repetition across chapters is understandable in a topical analysis, repetition within them is more difficult to excuse.

However, one cannot but admire an author who has given us so much to think about and whose generous spirit prompts him to offer his computer printouts (the fruit of the tedious task of listing and classifying Luther's works) to any scholar who cares to ask for them. It is the spirit that informed Luther himself in his better moments.

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Emmerson, Richard Kenneth. *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981. 366 pp. \$19.50.

Almost a century ago Wilhelm Bousset, in an entry for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, observed that "to write the history of the idea of Antichrist in the last centuries of the Middle Ages would be almost to write that of the Middle Ages themselves." Richard Emmerson's study of medieval apocalypticism, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, is the latest major contribution in a long line of works—beginning with J. Ernest Renan's *L'Antéchrist* (1873) and Bousset's own *The Antichrist Legend* (1896) and extending to Marjorie Reeves's *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (1976)—which attempt to clarify our understanding of this immense and complicated theme. Emmerson's study is comprehensive, informative, and often fascinating; but it would be presumptuous to conclude, in the light of Bousset's judgment, that the final word had yet been written on the medieval obsession with Antichrist.

Emmerson's book is largely what it purports to be, an interdisciplinary study of medieval eschatological thought concentrating on the Antichrist tradition. It draws upon a variety of sources, including commentaries, manuscripts, sermons, drama, and poetry. The disciplines that will benefit most from Emmerson's work are clearly those of medieval history, art, literature, and theology, with a heavy, and perhaps inevitable, bias to the theological.

Students of historical theology in particular will be interested in the first three chapters, which seek to identify and elucidate the person and purpose of Antichrist in medieval thought, and in the conclusion which, despite its title, ("Antichrist in the Renaissance"), focuses essentially on the Reformation and Counter-Reformation concepts of the Antichrist. Those interested in these disciplines within the periods designated will be indebted to Emmerson on a number of counts.

The thesis of this study is that in the medieval period, Antichrist was never wholly nor even principally identified with Rome and the Papacy. Although the medieval Antichrist tradition turns out to be very complex, it did not in general "equate Antichrist with the pope" (p. 7). In reaching this conclusion, Emmerson demonstrates that the medieval Antichrist concept developed largely on the strength of association and assumption, rather than on what today would be regarded as hermeneutically acceptable exegesis. This is already to acknowledge that medieval exegetes would claim to base their views on the biblical text. Consequently, to the assertion that for "the Christian of the Middle Ages" the medieval view of Antichrist was "rooted firmly in scriptural authority" (p. 34) must be added the crucial provisos that the Antichrist tradition developed largely because exegetes associated many biblical passages without sufficient reason for so doing, and that to such unwarranted associations were added the accretions derived from apocryphal sources, sibylline oracles, and oral legend (pp. 34-35). As Emmerson ultimately shows, it is to this amalgam of assumption and exegesis, revelation and speculation, that Counter-Reformation eschatology eventually returns in its attempt to find an Antichrist different from that of Reformation theology.

In working out his thesis, Emmerson reminds us that from the earliest times in the history of the Christian Church there have been two Antichrist traditions. One has expected Antichrist to appear shortly before the *parousia*, as a single individual openly opposed to Christ and the Church, a usurper claiming the prerogatives of Christ, a pseudo-Christ. The other tradition has seen Antichrist in a continuing succession of groups and traditions opposed to Christ and the gospel, in heretics, apostates, and all enemies of the Church, including Jews and Mohammedans. Although there was clearly an element in medieval apocalypticism which identified Antichrist with the Papacy, even with an individual pope (cf. Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* [London, Eng., 1976], pp. 39-40), and which can in retrospect be seen as a precursor of the view that came to full flower in the Reformation, there remained a broader understanding, which, rooted in the seminal Antichrist texts of 1 John 2:18, 22 and 4:3, understood the Antichrist to designate any individual or body of individuals essentially opposed to Christ and the gospel.

It follows from this that belief in Antichrist may have a personal relevance as well as, or even more significant than, any ultimate eschatological meaning. As Emerson discerningly emphasizes, the Old French poem *Tournoiement de l'Antecrist* is "more concerned with the conversion of Huon than with the end of the world," and is "not primarily eschatological" (p. 191). If Emerson's interpretation of *Tournoiement de l'Antecrist* is correct, then ultimately the battle between good and evil in the individual soul may be of equal importance to the eschatological drama played out on a cosmic stage.

It is only fair to add that this view of Antichrist is balanced by William Langland's Antichrist in *Piers Plowman*, the fourteenth-century English poem which, as Emerson points out, ends with its chief character "near death in a corrupt church, Unity, hopelessly besieged from without and undermined from within by the hosts of Antichrist" (p. 193).

Indeed, Emerson's analysis of *Piers Plowman* is one of the most enlightening features of the entire study, and it deserves notice for its determination to interpret the poem in a manner quite different from that of most contemporary critics. Emerson is particularly interested in the poem's eschatological conclusion; he sees it as "typical of the Antichrist tradition, which is both pessimistic and optimistic" (p. 200), and he thereby suggests implicitly that at the level of individual appropriation a synthesis of the two traditionally opposing interpretations of Antichrist is both possible and desirable. Rather than the "radical Joachimist expectation of a *renovatio mundi* after Antichrist's defeat," with all that that implies, "*Piers Plowman* emphasizes the need for an individual search for salvation" (pp. 200, 201). The individual is to be more concerned with a present and personal victory over Antichrist than with the eschatological drama; and indeed, such a victory is itself a preparation for the eschatological drama which yet will inevitably ensue. Emerson argues his case here with insight and conviction, striving at the same time to dispel the notion that *Piers Plowman* defends any concept of ultimate social transformation.

Two additional consequences of Emerson's work also deserve comment here. First, his survey of medieval apocalypticism provides further evidence that postmillennialism, as such, did not originate with Daniel Whitby in the eighteenth century, a view set forth in L. E. Fromm's four-volume *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (see 2:651). Whitby may well have brought various elements of postmillennialism together, and promulgated them with greater effectiveness, but many of the essential elements of Whitby's millennial expectations were clearly anticipated by various millenarian movements of the later Middle Ages. (Notice also the British

antecedents of Whitbyism mentioned in the present writer's *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* [Leiden, 1975], p. 170). Emerson's study confirms that a common feature of much millenarian expectation was that of a reign of the saints on earth prior to Christ's Second Advent, even if that reign was not always of a thousand-years' duration. In the light of the evidence, Whitby cannot rightly be regarded as "the avowed originator" of postmillennialism.

The second point of note relating to Emerson's study is of quite a different nature from that which has been treated in my foregoing comments. It deals with the matter of the source material Emerson calls upon, much of which is not theological in a strictly technical sense. While his discussion is clearly theological in content, his net is cast much wider than sermons, commentaries, homilies, and the like. We are thus reminded of the fact that literature, in the classical sense, can be the handmaid of theology, and an effective instrument for the dissemination of spiritual truth. One feels instinctively that C. S. Lewis, for example, would have understood and approved the appearance of Antichrist and of other protagonists in the spiritual warfare of man in medieval drama and poetry. Emerson's examination of the relevant poems and plays is therefore rather a timely reminder that the popular mind can be influenced by religious concepts and impregnated by spiritual realities through media that are other than overtly religious. At least, this seems to have been the case in the Middle Ages; and if then, why not in other ages? If Emerson's study does nothing more than point us to the fact that literature in all its forms is a perfectly legitimate vehicle for conveying religious truth, it will have done much.

The foregoing merits notwithstanding, this publication is not without flaws, two of which in particular are related and cannot be passed over. First, Emerson is too imprecise in regard to the historical periods with which his study is concerned. One becomes slightly uneasy when Augustine and Orosius, for example, are called to the defence of the medieval church; and one becomes decidedly uncomfortable when Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Jerome, *inter alia*, join their ranks. If, as would generally be accepted, the medieval period began in ca. A.D. 600, why is this study so heavily weighted with names which evidently belong to the patristic period? This question is not sufficiently answered by the author's own statement of intent to call upon early church sources.

Similarly, in Emerson's "Conclusion: Antichrist in the Renaissance" (pp. 204-237), the Renaissance appears to be confused with the Reformation from a chronological standpoint. Bale, Tyndale, and Foxe, although they may have been influenced by Renaissance thought, are essentially

Reformation figures, and the authors whom Emerson cites as evidence of the vitality of the medieval tradition would, almost without exception, be more correctly categorized as writers of the Counter-Reformation rather than of the Renaissance. All in all, one feels that a more accurate title for Emerson's conclusion would be "Antichrist in the Reformation." Important as this final chapter unquestionably is to the study as a whole, it has very little to do with a Renaissance Antichrist.

The second, and related, weakness—one upon which a more severe critic might conclude that the author's thesis almost founders—concerns the *use of sources*. Emerson cites patristic sources much too frequently as evidence of views considered to have been held during the Middle Ages. The distinction between early and medieval thought is, in fact, repeatedly blurred. It is difficult to see, for example, how Lactantius (ca. A.D. 240-320) could have condemned a medieval legend (p. 29). And surely, it is not permissible to cite Origen, or Victorinus, or Chrysostom as representative medieval commentators, particularly *in tandem* with Rupert of Deutz, or Peter Lombard, or Rabanus Maurus (see especially chap. 1 and also p. 97 in chap. 3). Admittedly, Emerson usually quotes medieval writers alongside the patristic sources, and this must be conceded to validate the study as a whole, even though most references to medieval writers are to reprints or standard collections such as Migne's *Patrologiae* or the various series of the Early English Text Society. It remains true, however, that the study would have been stronger for less dependence on the Greek and Latin early-church fathers and for greater dependence on medieval source material in primary form.

Only at one point does Emerson's delineation of the Antichrist tradition falter, and that is in the conclusion, where there appears to be some uncertainty over the Protestant identification of Antichrist. Thus, in answer to the seminal question as to who is Antichrist, Emerson replies that in Reformation thought it is both the Papacy ("the Protestant identification," p. 206) and "all, including Mohammedans, who persecute the true church" (p. 211). Emerson is accurate in pointing to the general Protestant view that the Papacy as an institution, rather than any individual pope, constituted Antichrist; but he is less than accurate to gloss over the fact that Luther and many who followed him conceived of Antichrist as a dualistic eschatological power composed of an eastern Antichrist and a western Antichrist—Turk and Papacy, respectively. Both are necessary to a full understanding of Antichrist in the thinking of most Reformation writers, a point which Emerson seems to have missed.

Moreover, to plead that in making comparison between Reformation and medieval interpretation on five major questions, there is heavy dependence on English Protestant writings "for the sake of brevity" (p. 211) is

really rather weak, particularly in view of the fact that the Protestant tradition was much wider than that which flourished in England, and, moreover, was elsewhere equally as concerned with the identification of Antichrist as were the English interpreters. Once again, the question of relevant sources raises its head.

Despite these reservations, Emerson has provided an important addition to our understanding of the Antichrist tradition, and has given a fresh warning to the unwary who might be tempted to jump to unwarranted conclusions concerning the enigmatic figure of Antichrist. The book is copiously and accurately documented with no less than seventy pages of tightly-packed footnotes, and it carries an impressive bibliography. It has an Index of Biblical Texts and also a General Index which, although lengthy, is weakened by excessive omissions.

The book is pleasant to the eye and is well-produced, although containing some interesting typographical errors. Thus, "Elias the Thisbite" (p. 99) should probably be "Elias the Tishbite"; "worhiped" (p. 152) should be "worshipped" (or in the American spelling "worshipped"); and Elizabeth's "ascension" (p. 227) should probably be her "accession," which would presumably have been more to the liking of her bishops. And we should not conclude that Simon Magus (p. 27) is a magician with musical abilities since he performs wonders and "sings"!

Such minor blemishes do not, of course, affect the medieval theology of Antichrist, a theology which has been amply and adequately investigated in this study. Initial apprehensions about a professor of English (Emerson's position at Walla Walla College) venturing into the arena of medieval theology are sufficiently dispelled by the work itself, and the book as a whole confirms its author as a mature, informed, and fluent scholar.

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Forell, George Wolfgang. *The Luther Legacy*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983. 79 pages. Paperback, \$3.95.

For anyone, young person or adult, who does not wish to plow through any of the definitive works on Luther's life and thought, Forell's little book is a good introduction. Written in an uncomplicated, yet precise, readable style, it captivates the reader's attention with all of the salient facts of the great Reformer's life. It is obvious that the author is well informed and is able vividly to portray Luther in his historical setting