

directly examining the debates in the Presbyterian Church as well as more general cultural studies. These broad-ranging sources enable the author to show clearly the interaction of the church and culture, a viewpoint that Briggs himself would have appreciated.

A number of Massa's arguments are worthy of attention. His understanding of Briggs as one who sought to combine heartfelt piety with scientific rigor clarifies the mediating role of this era of American biblical criticism. That the inerrancy position emerged to canonical status, primarily because of ecclesiastical needs in the course of Briggs's heresy trial, adds a valuable insight into the often-discussed origins of fundamentalism. Briggs's view that historical criticism should be regarded as a symbol of an underlying change in world view helps us identify the cultural as well as theological shift under way in his times.

Although Massa in several places argues that historical criticism involved a changing world view, he never really explains the nature of this new worldview beyond stating that "all historical phenomena" are "products of their cultural milieu and [are] open to critical study and analysis." The history of any phenomenon is, therefore, sufficient explanation of it. Further elaboration of these points would have clarified the revolutionary implications of this new worldview. The book's origin as a dissertation may explain why this larger argument is more assumed than explained.

For those traditions still struggling to come to grips with historical thinking, Briggs's continuing relevance is of little doubt. Massa has enabled us to better understand this historic effort to accommodate traditional Christian values with modern critical presuppositions.

Andrews University

GARY LAND

Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. Trans. by Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1990 (copyright 1989). xx + 380 pp. \$29.95.

The Luther quincentenary in 1983 brought a flurry of publications on Martin Luther, the great pioneer Protestant Reformer. Just the year before that Luther celebration, Heiko Oberman's monumental *Luther: Mensch zwischen Gott und Teufel* was published by Severin and Seidler in Berlin. Having this volume now in English will enrich a wider popular audience with Oberman's valuable insights.

This book is not a Luther biography as such, but includes or touches virtually all significant matters normally appearing in Luther biographies. The author has presented a thematic approach using as its springboard and underlying thread the concept indicated in the book's subtitle, "Man between God and the Devil." A good statement of the author's rationale is found on p. 104: "Luther's world of thought is wholly distorted and apologetically misconstrued if his conception of the Devil is dismissed as a medieval phenomenon and only his faith in Christ retained as relevant or as the only decisive

factor. Christ and the Devil were equally real to him: one was the perpetual intercessor for Christianity, the other a menace to mankind till the end."

Oberman's treatment has been divided into three main parts: "The Longed-for Reformation," "The Unexpected Reformation," and "The Reformation in Peril," with multiple chapters in each part. The book is enhanced by an extensive section of endnotes (pp. 331-354), a chronological outline (pp. 355-363), a subject index (pp. 365-373), and an index of names (pp. 374-380). The chronological outline is particularly useful in that it not only gives events in Luther's own career but also a rather extensive listing of other events during Luther's lifetime (1483-1546); a few highlights go back as far as 1453 and ahead to 1555.

Among the numerous penetrating insights afforded in this volume, space permits mention of only one—Oberman's solution to the vexing question of Luther's so-called "Tower Discovery." Untold ink has been spilled by scholars attempting to decide whether or not there was such an event; and if so, just when and where it occurred. One of the major problems has been to ascertain precisely what Luther meant by saying that this Reformation breakthrough came to him in the *cloaca*, or "toilet." Was the locale actually such an unseemly place, or was it rather Luther's study room in the "tower" above the toilet?

Oberman's solution goes in quite another direction and is compelling. He points out that the *cloaca* "is not just a privy, it is the most degrading place for man and [is] the Devil's favorite habitat. Medieval monks already knew this, but the Reformer knows even more now: it is right here that we have Christ, the mighty helper, on our side. No spot is unholy for the Holy Ghost; this is the very place to express contempt for the adversary through trust in Christ crucified" (p. 155).

Negatives regarding Oberman's *Luther* are few, but some should nevertheless be noted. For instance, the statement on p. 116, "In the German academic world around 1500 Erfurt had only one basic academic advantage," is rather sweeping. In a few rare instances, the choice of English vocabulary seems inappropriate or even misleading (some of this perhaps attributable to the English translation and some to Oberman's original). For example, the words "fundamentalism" (p. 220) and "chiasm" (p. 59) have connotations in modern America that stretch beyond Oberman's obvious intent.

Even though Oberman gives a refreshingly appreciative and generally acceptable sketch of the Brethren of the Common Life, he unduly denigrates them as having "a much more pedestrian role than, as the older thesis had it, the promotion by the Brethren of the Renaissance north of the Alps through their writing and teaching" (p. 96). His evaluation is based, according to his own endnote reference (p. 335), on R. R. Post's "demythologization" set forth in the latter's *The Modern Devotion* (1968). Sadly, Post's elaborate discussion in that volume is so flawed as to make it entirely unreliable. Furthermore, Oberman is incorrect in saying that the *Devotio Moderna* had spread "westward [better: southwestward] to Paris" (p. 96), for none of the three constituent organizations within this widespread movement founded any houses anywhere in France (though Jean Standonck's reform of the Collège Montaigu and

the monastic reforms inspired in northern France by Jean Mombaer and his colleagues did, of course, reveal influence from the *Devotio*).

In conclusion, Oberman's *Luther* is an excellent volume, exceptionally well conceived and well written. It is packed with accurate, indisputable, and important facts. The text, moreover, is enhanced by the inclusion of numerous illustrations. Some scholars may take issue with various of Oberman's interpretations, but this reviewer concurs with virtually all of the positions enunciated in this challenging volume. Furthermore, in addition to the book's brilliant presentation of content, the English translation is superb. Reading of this publication either in its German original or in its English translation is well-advised, indeed.

Andrews University

KENNETH A. STRAND

Overman, J. Andrew. *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. \$11.95.

Overman's book, based on his Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Boston University (under the chairmanship of Howard Kee), marries the tools of New Testament scholarship to those of sociology to advance the thesis that the Matthean community developed and defined itself over against formative Judaism. This thesis is expounded in three long chapters, dealing respectively with the background of the pre-A.D. 70 sects, formative Judaism, and the formation of the Matthean community.

As Overman reconstructs it, Christianity and formative Judaism were like twin sisters: they both grew up in the post-A.D. 70 environment, when both communities were seeking to redefine themselves. Formative Judaism has the aspect of an elder sister, dominating the environment in which the Matthean community found itself, while the community took the role of a sect. Like many comparable sects in Judaism in the first century before and after Christ, this Christian group regarded the Jewish leadership as corrupt and lawless. It saw itself as righteous, the embodiment of true Judaism. It withdrew from the wider community, both religious and civil—defining its own community leaders, and even running its own court system. It viewed all outsiders, especially those in the Jewish leadership, with great suspicion, withdrawing into itself, and cutting off most contacts with the outside world.

Overman has provided a coherent view of the interface between Matthean Christianity and formative Judaism. He is to be commended for recognizing the central role that the interpretation of the law played in the controversy between formative Judaism and early Christianity and for highlighting the continuing validity which the law retained within the Matthean community, particularly the sabbath and purity laws. He is undoubtedly correct in his basic methodological assumption that the community formed its self-definition in response to its environment. His linkage of the language and attitudes of other near-contemporary sectarian movements is suggestive and helpful. Overman is also to be congratulated for his awareness of the contribution made by sociology and archaeology to the study of the Gospel of Matthew.