

flowering of regional culture under Roman protection? Or as conscious bastions of Hellenism in an 'Arab' world?" (391). A concept that is repeated throughout the book is the idea that even though Rome granted colony status to cities and regions, it was Greek culture, not Roman, that characterized the life of the common people. Inscriptions are quoted to give the reader a view of life under Roman rule. However, when handling questions where sufficient evidence has not been found, footnotes point the reader to other authoritative sources. The author's use of archaeological data mainly pertains to inscriptions, although he presents other evidence, such as town plans and fort structures, that support his arguments.

The book would have been more complete if, instead of starting after the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C., it had gone clear back to 63 B.C. with Rome's first invasion of the Middle East. This, however, would have made the book prohibitively large. The maps are very useful for orientation of cities, but might have been easier to use if they were placed in each chapter, rather than grouped at the back of the book. Also included are several appendices.

This book is not an introductory textbook. It is not for a student who is unfamiliar with Roman history. While the author does explain in detail many aspects of the Imperial expansion, the many references to and citations of untranslated Greek inscriptions make it challenging to read. On the other hand, Millar offers the nonspecialist a plethora of resources for further study.

The book is destined to become a classic, because it bridges the gap between classical historians and Orientalists. The book is recommended for any serious student of Roman history.

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Olson, Jeannine E. *One Ministry, Many Roles: Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992. 461 pp. \$21.95.

Jeannine Olson (Ph.D. in history, Stanford University) is an assistant professor at Rhode Island College with a background of teaching at institutions with a religious orientation (San Francisco Theological Seminary, Graduate Theological Union). She has drawn from many earlier sources in an attempt to construct a comprehensive picture of the deacon and deaconess movements through the centuries.

The work follows a chronological pattern with chapters devoted to the New Testament practice, the early church up to Constantine, the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, the Protestant Reformation, the post-Reformation period, the nineteenth century in Europe, the nineteenth century in Britain and America, the early twentieth century, and contemporary trends. About 65 percent of the material is post-Reformation.

As the title indicates, the roles of deacons and deaconesses have been perceived in a variety of ways depending on the historical period and the

particular denomination. To one nurtured in a faith community in which these offices are held by congregationally elected lay people, it is somewhat surprising to note the extent to which they have been considered clergy in other bodies or at least seen as full-time, professional positions.

In NT times the diaconate was a ministry of service to the poor and needy, but as the medieval church developed, the office came to have more liturgical functions. It often came to be regarded as an assistant-pastor role and often a stepping stone to the priesthood. From the Reformation on, the church, rather than government was usually responsible for education, healing, and welfare, and deacons and deaconesses often served as the teachers, nurses, and social workers of society. Even today a significant professional diaconate exists, especially among Catholic and mainline Protestant denominations.

The book's strong points are first of all its comprehensiveness. Olson is not content with sweeping overviews but includes micro details of every deaconess home, every rule of order, and every historical fact that she could possibly discover. If the reader wants details about the history of deacons and deaconesses, this is the place to look.

The work is also extremely well-referenced. Endnotes are included after each chapter and total about seventy-two pages of small print, followed by a bibliography of twenty-five pages.

A third favorable point is that the reader learns more about church history than just the fortunes of deacons and deaconesses. In detailing this history, Olson also necessarily includes much about the polity, governance, and ministry of the Christian church and the major denominations that developed from it. The decisions of church councils—as they affect ministry—are discussed, and considerable space is devoted to the ecumenical movement, especially as to its impact on a common ministry.

For all its strong scholarship though, the book has serious weaknesses. One is that it seems somewhat disorganized and difficult to follow. Of course, the chapter organization follows a historical progression and therefore is logical. But within the chapters, material seems often to be ordered without apparent reason, and there is much repetition and overlapping. This is particularly true in the chapters dealing with modern times where the text seems to “jump around.” Thus it can be confusing and difficult to integrate into a sensible configuration.

The greatest weakness, in my opinion, is that the volume simply makes very tedious reading. It may serve well as a reference work, but to read it from cover to cover (as I did) takes a certain amount of dedication and grit. The average pastor or Bible teacher will probably find four hundred pages of mostly meaningless detail more than he or she wants to know about deacons and deaconesses. The few specialists in the field, however, may find Olson's *magnum opus* a real gold mine. It is not likely to make the religious best-seller list.