

Persecution and suffering provide the context for the call for vengeance and vindication, Musvosvi demonstrates in his third chapter. Specifically, in the book of Revelation, persecution is the experience to be expected by the church, following the experience of their Lord, the martyr *par excellence* (175). God is portrayed in Revelation as the Sovereign Lord who hears from his sanctuary the cries of his covenant people and promises to bring vindication for them and judgment against their persecutors. The sanctuary is the place of sacrifice, and it is also the place from which vindication and judgment proceed (186-88). It is, indeed, the locus of the covenant relationship. It is not surprising, then, that the appeal for vengeance in Rev 6:10 "is to be understood in the light of the covenant motif, addressed to God as *despotēs*, the absolute ruler who can bring redress and justice for his abused and mistreated vassal servants (216). The accusation of justice will be taken as a lawsuit to court, where the just Judge will render a verdict in favor of those who have been treated unjustly and against those who have abused them (225-232, 248).

To simply render a verdict, however, would not ensure that justice was done (237). Therefore, the vindication is accompanied by restoration, and the condemnation, by punishment (255).

The dissertation is well written, despite a lot of mechanical errors. It is incisive and easy to read. It follows a logical progression of thought and covers most of the questions that would be raised in the discussion. The exegetical portion in chapter 4 is very well done, bringing from the text many insightful ideas that clarify the issues. I would highly recommend this volume to any reader who has an interest in the question of theodicy, especially pastors who have to deal with the practical questions raised by the experiences of their parishioners in regard to suffering, injustice, and God's responsibility.

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Nilson, Jon. *Nothing Beyond the Necessary: Roman Catholicism and the Ecumenical Future*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995. 105 pp. \$7.95.

Jon Nilson, professor of theology at Loyola University of Chicago, has written this book on ecumenism to stimulate creativity and courage in Roman Catholic leaders. He challenges them to put into action their commitment to church unity. The author believes the ecumenical impact of the Second Vatican Council has slowed down and current ecumenical dialogues are stalled, producing an "ecumenical winter." To young theologians and church leaders, ecumenism seems to be "very old and unexciting news" (v). Although the ecumenical movement is irreversible, it needs new vigor. To rejuvenate it, Nilson offers to church leaders a simple solution drawn from Acts 15:28, "impose no burden beyond what is necessary."

In his first chapter, Nilson asserts that Christianity is ready for coalescing. Even though ecumenism is low on the churches' agendas, Christians are growing together and coming into one body. But the problem with modern ecumenism is

that bilateral dialogues produce statements of agreement that are rarely understood by the laity. These agreements are not working and Catholicism remains aloof, offering only symbolic gestures. What ecumenism really needs, according to Nilson, is a shared sacramental life that will ultimately bring about Church unity.

Chapters 2 and 3 are the theological foundation on which Nilson believes the future of Roman Catholic ecumenism lies. He maintains that unity is actually possible on the basis of Karl Rahner and Heinrich Fries' 1983 *Unity of the Churches. An Actual Possibility*. Their theses 1 and 2 "set forth the only basis on which the unity of the churches is realistically conceivable in our socio-cultural situation. . . . If we do not build unity on this foundation, let us at least be honest enough to declare that our unity . . . is impossible" (25). For Nilson, the Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, gives enough evidences to support the Rahner-Fries theses as a solid foundation for church unity. His purpose is therefore to creatively reassess the ecumenical implications of these theses.

In chapter 4, the author believes the time has come for the Catholic Church to tangibly show that it supports ecumenism. Roman Catholics and all Christians seeking unity should ask themselves what they are willing to abandon or surrender for the sake of unity. Based on *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Nilson says the Catholic Church agrees that there may come a time when deficiencies in conduct, in church discipline, or even in the formulation of doctrine might be appropriately rectified. He believes the time has now come for such initiatives. He argues that the "hierarchy of truths" concept should be clarified (66-73), that unity must be enacted in developing and implementing cooperative liturgical and sacramental programs in an atmosphere of mutual accountability (74-79), and that the doctrine of papal primacy, its meaning and limits, must be reexamined (81-89). Furthermore, Pope Leo XIII's judgment on Anglican orders should also be reexamined and no more Anglican priests be reordained in the Roman Catholic Church (90). Nilson affirms that these initiatives on the part of Catholic leaders would demonstrate that the Church is committed to unity and not only to dialogue.

Yet how far will Roman Catholicism go in its commitment to church unity? Perhaps Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical On Commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, is the answer to Nilson's query. While he reaffirms many ecumenical principles first articulated in *Unitatis Redintegratio* and also refers to Acts 15:28 (78), Pope John Paul still maintains an ecumenism of return to full fellowship with Roman Catholicism (11, 14, 86, 97) and that full doctrinal unity must precede a unified sacramental life (77, 78). Furthermore, contrary to the Rahner-Fries' theses and to Nilson's hope, the church will not accept doctrinal reductionism as a basis for Church unity (18, 36). However, on the positive side and agreeing with Nilson, this encyclical opens the door to a fresh reexamination of the papal primacy (88-96).

Although this book brings creativity and new perspectives into ecumenical discussions, it does not really bring any new thought. If Nilson's suggestions were followed we could perhaps see some visible unifications of churches with Roman Catholicism. Many Christian churches are waiting to see this kind of opening on the part of Rome in order to engage in further dialogue with it. But it is doubtful

that Rome will agree to follow Nilson's recommendations. One gets the distinct impression from *Ut Unum Sint* that the dawn of "spring" is not in the near future, at least not according to Nilson's prognostics.

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Oberman, Heiko A. *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*. Translated by Alan Colin Gaw. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994. xv + 234 pp. Paper, \$29.99.

Ever since the publication of his *A Harvest of Medieval Theology* in 1963, Heiko Oberman has commanded attention as a scholar whose major interest bridges the gap between the religious thought of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers and that of their medieval precursors. Although a few years ago he produced what I consider one of the most significant one-volume biographical treatments of Martin Luther (see my review in *AUSS* 29 [1991], 272-274), his most recent major publication prior to the present one bears a title which suggests Oberman's earlier and more general emphasis, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; and Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992). That volume of essays, which in some ways sets the stage for the present one, was not reviewed in *AUSS*. I would here simply state that it provides a breadth of treatment that goes far beyond what its title implies, and could well be read in conjunction with the present smaller book.

*The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications* is a collection of ten of Oberman's published articles in German which were first gathered into book form in 1985 under the title *Die Reformation. Von Wittenberg nach Genf* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1985). In noting his purpose for this compilation, Oberman has stated, "In the past I have concentrated primarily on the transition from medieval to early modern Europe, and on the unmistakable identity of the Reformation when it is seen from the perspective of the later Middle Ages. This volume, however, follows the winding path of the Reformation from Wittenberg through the southern German cities, south to Zurich, and then on to Geneva [this explains the German subtitle's specificity as compared to that of the English edition]. These essays, first published between 1966 [the date should be 1967] and 1984 . . . are not organized here by the dates of their publication or conception, but according to historical and chronological criteria" (xi). This plan of organization has been well chosen and makes the volume more cohesive and readable than it might otherwise have been.

The chapter titles in the volume are as follows: 1, "The Reformation: The Quest for the Historical Luther" (1-21); 2, "Martin Luther: Forerunner of the Reformation" (23-52); 3, "Martin Luther: Between the Middle Ages and Modern Times" (53-75); 4, "The Meaning of Mysticism from Meister Eckhart to Martin Luther" (77-90); 5, "*Wir sein Pettler. Hoc est verum*. Covenant and Grace in the Theology of the Middle Ages and Reformation" (91-115); 6, "Wittenberg's War on Two Fronts: What Happened in 1518 and Why" (117-148); 7, "From Protest to Confession: The *Confessio Augustina* as a Critical Test of True Ecumenism" (149-166); 8, "Truth and Fiction: The Reformation in the Light of the *Confutatio*" (167-