

because at first sight they appear as much masculine as feminine!

O'Collins has still another surprise reserved for the reader, the "Jewishness" of Jesus' presence. We are almost tempted to exclaim with the Roman writer, "*O tempora! O mores!*" in seeing this tribute now paid to the new climate in the Vatican-Israel relationship. But there is still more, a bridge stretched by O'Collins's Christology of "presence" to the non-Christian religions. O'Collins finds "three particular advantages for the perspective of presence: its Jewishness, its feminine face, and its spiritual, pastoral, and even mystical possibilities" (318). What "mystical possibilities"? "Respect for the multiform variety of his presence allows us to acknowledge Christ as everywhere present but in an infinite variety of ways" (322). This view looks more like pantheism or panentheism than the Christology of Scripture, about a Redeemer who offers the merits of his sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary, as is so clearly depicted in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

O'Collins's book can be divided into two parts. The first nine chapters, historical and objective, trace the development of Christology through the Council of Chalcedon and beyond. The last five chapters offer O'Collins's main contribution: a utopian Christology of "presence," a reflection of contemporary trends such as ecumenism, the feminist struggle, and the now-cordial relations between Roman Catholics and Jews. Is it not strange that in a Christology no mention is made of God's law and human sinfulness—the human predicament that Christ came to solve? How is one to understand O'Collins's total silence about Jesus' high-priestly intercession for man in the heavenly sanctuary? Can we really trust in a Christ whose statements are not necessarily his, but put on his lips by others (146)? Can one be satisfied with a Christology deprived of the "blessed hope" of Christ's return, reducing it to a more or less meaningless "eschaton"?

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Perkins, PHEME. *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Ed. James Luther Mays. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995. 204 pp. Hardcover, \$22.00.

Professor Perkins has added another volume to an excellent commentary series of which I find the New Testament volumes (Part I is edited by Achtemeier) particularly helpful in my exegetical classes for prospective pastors.

Despite the title of this volume, Perkins does not follow the canonical order but bases the commentary's structure on her dating of each epistle, earliest to latest: 1 Peter, James, Jude, 2 Peter. The order of the last two is based on the position held by many recent commentators that the author of 2 Peter used Jude extensively in the composition of his document.

Perkins does not accept the tradition that these epistles were written by apostles. She suggests that an apostle may have dictated 1 Peter, but points out that evidence for apostolic authorship for James, Jude, and 2 Peter "remains thin" (2). It is a pity that, due to space limitations, she never fully develops her position, instead of ignoring or just touching on contrary positions. For example, Ralph P. Martin suggests an early date for James with a reworking of the text by a later

editor. Professor Perkins sees this as ingenious, but dismisses it as lacking explicit evidence in the text (84). Yet, the evidence she presents for her dating of the epistles is no more explicit in the text than Professor Martin's.

What is important to Perkins, however, is not the debate as to who wrote what. It is the fact that first-century Christians accepted these documents as examples of true apostolic faith (3). They must, then, be accepted and interpreted with that perspective in mind.

The strength of the commentary is its solid, exegetical interpretation. The author also offers excellent insights from social-scientific studies by scholars such as John Elliot and Jerome Neyrey (particularly in Perkins's commentary on 1 Peter). Yet, there is very little reference to other social-descriptive studies that could bring added perspectives on the settings of the epistles. The weakness of the commentary is its homiletical exposition. There is almost none in the study on Jude! The intent of the editors and writers of the Interpretation series is for each volume to explain and then to apply, thereby meeting the needs of students, teachers, ministers, and priests. This volume emphasizes exegesis over application. The preacher will find good, exegetical insights, but little extrapolation to make the text come alive to the congregants in the pews. Professor Perkins has written an important addition to the growing number of tomes on the General Epistles. However, her commentary is better suited to an exegetical series than to a series which combines teaching and preaching, academics and liturgics.

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Robbins, Vernon K. *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. xiii + 278 pp. Paper, \$22.99.

In this book Vernon Robbins, Professor of Religion at Emory University, provides the most in-depth and systematic discussion to date of the method of Biblical interpretation known as socio-rhetorical criticism, a method he has been developing through numerous articles and books since the publication of *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* in 1984. It should be noted that his *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*, a book similar to the one being reviewed, also appeared in 1996. Although both books contain a very similar outline, *Exploring the Texture of Texts* is intended to guide readers through the steps of actually applying socio-rhetorical methods, while *Tapestry* lays the theoretical and methodological foundations for the approach.

Through socio-rhetorical criticism Robbins seeks to find an alternative for dominant modes of Biblical interpretation that focus on a single aspect of the text, be it historical, social, theological, etc. By systematically placing several specialized areas of analysis in dialogue with each other, socio-rhetorical criticism reads and rereads texts using multiple strategies of interpretation without favoring one over the other. It should be noted that Robbins' method relies heavily on rhetorical-critical and social-scientific modes of interpretation.

In chapters 1 and 2 Robbins discusses some of the theoretical presuppositions