
Müller, Ekkhardt, *Die Lehre von Gott: Biblischer Befund und Theologische Herausforderungen*. St. Peter am Hart, Austria: Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen. 2010. 308 pp. Hardcover. €15,90.

In the introduction to his treatment of the doctrine of God, Ekkhardt Müller states that his goal is “to help the reader to increase his knowledge of God and to make possible for him a deeper relationship with our Lord” (20). To that end, the book includes chapters the author describes as technical and theological, with material suitable for Bible study groups and a final chapter that can be understood as a sermon on the love of God.

This welcome addition to Adventist discussions of Christian doctrine is best understood, then, as essentially pastoral in nature. The subtitle of the book articulates its two principle foci: biblical materials and theological questions. While encouraging the reader to accept the Scripture as the primary source of and ultimate authority over thinking about God, Müller nevertheless implicitly acknowledges that the sort of knowledge of God he wishes to foster cannot be had by mere repetition of scriptural quotations. Theological questions must be answered both because “Christian faith must make sense,” and because a coherent comprehensive conception of faith and life is “necessary for our wellbeing” (177- 178).

The first four chapters offer brief discussions of the history of Christian doctrine concerning God, the extent to which God can be known, the subjects of revelation and inspiration in relation to a doctrine of God, and the question of the existence of God. The pastoral character of the book is readily apparent in the conclusion to the fourth chapter, where the reader is encouraged to address the question of God’s existence by “making a test” thereby learning that God’s existence can be “experimentally demonstrated” (82).

Beginning, in chapter 5, with a survey of biblical names and titles for God, Müller then offers a catalog of divine attributes typical of Christian doctrines of God. Returning to explicitly exegetical work, chapter 7, which discusses God as he is portrayed in the book of Revelation, provides the biblical ground for the center of Müller’s doctrine, his treatment of the Trinity. By way of rounding out his doctrine, the author takes up the profound issue of suffering’s relation to God, followed by a discussion of the contemporary topic of “inclusive” theological language.

The general reader, for whom the book is best suited, will find discussion of a wide range of biblical material. Müller’s exposition of that material models reflective appropriation of the scriptural witness and thereby invites the reader to join in that task. This is the greatest strength of the book. It is to be hoped he will find many readers who increase just that knowledge of God that is both theologically sound and personally transformative.

It is also gratifying to see an Adventist doctrine of God centered in

the Trinity. Rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity by some of the most prominent early Adventists happily did not have any permanent impact on the teachings of the denomination. Nevertheless, review of belief #2 of the denomination's 28 fundamental beliefs reveals the following single sentence on the matter: "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons." Suffice it to say that the accumulated wisdom of the followers of Christ regarding the doctrine of God is scarcely hinted at in this remark. One cannot but hope that Müller's work will deepen a denominational appreciation for the necessary centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in any authentically Christian doctrine of God.

The principal weakness of the book may be described as a certain ambivalence regarding the relationship between Scripture and theological reflection. For example, Müller insists on the traditional use of the term *homoousios* in his affirmation of Trinitarian thinking after dismissing most of the Christian theological tradition because of its purported distortion by alien philosophical concepts. As he is no doubt aware, the term *homoousios* was originally controversial precisely because it has no antecedent biblical use. The obvious philosophical origin of the term is, as Müller's use demonstrates, no reason for its exclusion from theology. By extension, opposing biblical to philosophical thinking generally handicaps theological appropriation of Scripture.

Müller's treatment of the problem of suffering includes several critically important claims. And it is also the chapter in the book that most successfully joins exegesis and critical thought in the interest of saving faith. As he says, suffering is senseless and destructive (235). Even more crucially, he contends God is not under accusation because of suffering (243). Adventist thought about God would be profoundly improved if it were to abandon the notion that any of God's creatures are in a position to bring accusations against him. He is also beneficially clear that if life as we know it is the only life there is, the problem of suffering cannot be solved (242). Although these central affirmations might well lead to a somewhat different overall treatment of the theme of God and suffering, Müller is to be thanked for his clarity on these points.

Theologians will find the book leaves much to be desired in its "technical" discussions. Karl Rahner's influential treatise on the Trinity receives no attention. Likewise Jürgen Moltmann's, Wolfhart Pannenberg's, and Eberhard Jüngel's work on that doctrine are ignored, to mention only German thinkers. Robert Jensen's widely acclaimed restatement of the doctrine of the Trinity is also absent. More striking is the absence of reference to Norman Gulley's *Systematic Theology*, as it can be assumed that Gulley's thought is generally congenial to Müller's. David Hart's indispensable book, *The Doors of the Sea*, is not taken into account in the generally good discussion of suffering. But the intended audience may be taken to explain

the many omissions of this sort. The general reader will find the book interesting and valuable. And it can be recommended to them.

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John A. Radano, ed. *Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism: Exploring the Achievements of International Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. xxvi + 330 pp. Paperback, \$40.00.

This book is the publication of papers presented at a conference held at St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity in St. Paul, Minnesota, in June 2010 to commemorate the centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. This missionary conference is seen as the event that set in motion the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement and facilitated the rapprochement of many long-separated churches. Since Edinburgh, significant ecumenical developments have emerged through dialogues between churches. This volume offers an analysis of the effectiveness of international dialogues involving the Catholic Church and is edited by John A. Radano who served on the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity at the Vatican from 1984 to 2008. In connection with this book, it is worth noting the publication in 2009 of another similar volume on the Catholic Church's involvement in ecumenical dialogues: Cardinal Walter Kasper's *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 2009). Cardinal Kasper was one of the organizers of the conference in St. Paul and wrote the foreword to this book of essays.

Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism is divided in two major parts. In the first part, four chapters give a general survey of the achievements of international multilateral dialogues, particularly in relation to the work of the World Council of Churches and the Commission on Faith and Order. These chapters provide a brief survey of the development of the ecumenical movement since Edinburgh and a historical context for the dialogues the Catholic Church has been involved in. The second part provides reflections and analyses of the achievements of international bilateral dialogues following the Second Vatican Council, involving the Catholic Church and other church groups. Fourteen chapters present the achievements of dialogues with the Lutheran World Federation (in dialogue from 1967), the World Methodist Council (from 1967), the Anglican Communion (from 1970), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (from 1970), the Pentecostal World Fellowship (from 1972), the Evangelical World Alliance (from 1977), the Disciples of Christ (from 1977), Eastern Orthodox Churches (from 1980), the Baptist World Alliance (from 1984), the Mennonite World Conference (from 1998), and Oriental Orthodox Churches (from 2003). Other informal dialogues are