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John Chrysostom

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It didn't have to be that way. It was an accident, not a toxic disease. It is when Constantine raised up the cross as a sign to conquer the world that this misreading of Jesus' death became toxic for Jews. Within this culture they would be enemies by definition, for they were not only responsible for his death, they continued to refuse to acknowledge him as their promised Messiah. A living Jew was a threat to Christian self-understanding.

It didn't - it doesn't - have to be this way, according to James Carroll. He ends his narrative with an ambitious plan for the reform of the church, his beloved church, which is his mother still.

Glen Nelson
Toronto, Ontario

John Chrysostom

Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen

London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2000

230 pages, \$37.99 Softcover

In 1908, Pope St. Pius X declared St. John Chrysostom to be the "patron saint of preachers." Chrysostom, a title of honour and affection meaning "Golden-mouth," was a fourth-century Eastern Church Father who has left a corpus of hundreds of homilies and numerous letters and treatises. In recent decades, new scholarly interest in the life and theology of Chrysostom has led to a variety of books and articles of high academic calibre. One of these recent publications is *John Chrysostom*, part of the "Early Church Fathers" series under the editorship of Carol Harrison of the University of Durham in the UK.

I had the pleasure of meeting the authors of this new book in May of 2001 at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Patristic Studies during the "Learneds" conference at Laval University. Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen are first-rate patristics scholars working at the Centre for Early Christian Studies of Australian Catholic University. This centre, under the direction of Pauline, is now the home for the International Association of Patristic Studies and hosts regular highly-regarded conferences. The principal author, Wendy Mayer, is one of the world's leading Chrysostom scholars, and her careful research of many years duration is reflected in this readable and informative volume.

The text opens with roughly 50 pages of introductory material divided into six chapters: "John's Life and Times," "The Liturgical Setting," "John as Preacher," "John's Audience," "John as Soul-Carer," and "Pastoral Care and Daily Life." The background provided paints a picture of Chrysostom's character and context in a critical but sympathetic fashion. I have heard it said that often historical figures, including church Fathers, are written about and spoken of as "talking heads," where more concern is given to their ideas rather than their personality and social context. Mayer and Allen provide a more rounded view of John as a man of his times, as well as a pastor, preacher, and theologian. These chapters are written in an interesting and engaging fashion that brings John to life for the modern reader.

The book continues with several fresh translations of homilies and letters, with appropriate introductory material that addresses historical details, John's rhetorical style, as well as his particular pastoral concerns. These include "On Ephesians Homily 11," "On Colossians Homily 7," "Homily Delivered After The Remains of Martyrs Etc.," "A Homily on Martyrs," "On His Return," "On the Statues Homily 17," "Against the Games and Theatres," "Baptismal Instruction 8," "On Eutropius," "On: 'I Opposed Him to His Face,'" "On: 'My Father's Working Still,'" "Against the Jews Oration 1," "On 1 Corinthians Homily 21," "On the Acts of the Apostles Homily 3," "Concerning Blessed Philogonius," and "Letters from Exile." These selections provide an excellent introduction to John's moral and social thought, and provide insight into the historical conditions of fourth century Antioch and Constantinople in the early Byzantine period. One can easily envision standing in John's church, listening to him preach with passion and conviction; one understands readily why the crowds often enthusiastically applauded (and were occasionally annoyed)!

The book is useful on several fronts. First of all, it is a fine introduction to a major church Father whose influence is still felt in East and West, amongst Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, and Protestants of various confessions. Chrysostom has come under fire in recent decades for being "misogynist" and "anti-Jewish"; the book clearly shows that both criticisms take John out of his context by applying post-modern (and anachronistic) questions to an ancient thinker. Chrysostom's life reveals his close working relationship with numerous women, and his rhetorical methodology against Jews, while

at times offensive by our standards, reflects a larger pastoral concern of a priest who was legitimately afraid of losing his parishioners to the large and established Jewish community of Antioch. Mayer and Allen are not uncritical of Chrysostom, but do place him firmly in his historical and pastoral context, with a solid and succinct overview of his rhetorical method within the conventions of ancient oratory. Of course, the book could say much more, but within the limits of a relatively short volume, Mayer and Allen produce a very workable and useful summary of the Golden-mouth's life and legacy.

A pastor, preacher, or interested student of early church history will find this handsome and engaging book to open up the world of two ancient and influential churches, Antioch and Constantinople, through the life, homilies, and writings of one of their more memorable pastors. I highly recommend *John Chrysostom* as a good investment for one's personal or church library.

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Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality

Clifford J. Green

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999

392 pages, \$31.95 Softcover

This volume makes available to a new generation of students of the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer a landmark work of English language scholarship long out of print in its original 1975 edition. Green's work continues to represent one of the few enduring efforts in English to consider the developments and continuities of the whole of Bonhoeffer's corpus of writings.

The revisions to the new edition are significant. The scholarly apparatus of the work has been updated, reference now being made to the critical edition of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* and parallel English translations where available. Eberhard Bethge's biography is also now cited in its recently republished and unabridged English edition. These revisions, in and of themselves, are invaluable. An index, absent from the earlier edition, is now also helpfully included.