

11-1-2001

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Recommended Citation

Jorgenson, Allen (2001) "Eschatology," *Consensus*: Vol. 27 : Iss. 2 , Article 19.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol27/iss2/19>

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Eschatology

Hans Schwartz

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000

431 pages, \$39.95 Softcover

Readers may remember Hans Schwartz as the author of the section on eschatology in Braaten and Jenson's *Christian Dogmatics*. Schwartz's latest book builds upon his earlier work in developing the thesis that Christian eschatology is a call for the faithful to anticipate proleptically the new creation in the present. *Eschatology* builds upon and develops much of his earlier material and demonstrates Schwartz's interest in and command of a broad range of subject matter.

The text first relocates the importance of eschatology insofar as Christianity's inherited notion of time as linear implies an ultimate future orientation. This, in turn, implies progress, although he notes that the modern notion of progress is a deficient mode of eschatology insofar as it mistakes the penultimate for the ultimate. Eschatology makes possible a positive notion of progress and, as such, attends to the God-given goal of history which orders the social and ethical transformation of the world to the reign of God. Two key dangers attend the task of eschatology; an undue restraint which ignores the significance of an eschatological framework for theology and a "travelogue eschatology" which makes eschatology the sum of the theological task. In short, Christian theology is hindered by both disinterest in and an untoward interest in eschatology.

In preparation for his constructive contributions to the theme of eschatology, Schwartz first reviews scriptural and early church treatments of the scope of eschatology. In the second part of the work he recounts the history of the rediscovery of the theme in nineteenth and twentieth century theologians. He provides a synopsis of the contributions to the topic as found in liberation, feminist, and process theology. The text both relates the theme of eschatology to world religions and sets it in a conversation with science, philosophy, and modern religiosity. In the final section of the book, he articulates a Christian understanding of eschatology in relationship to death, the immortality of the soul (understood as God's continuing relatedness to the deceased), and resurrection. He also reviews religious movements obsessed with setting a date for the end, millennialist interests in

eschatology, purgatory, and the theme of the *Apokatastasis Panton*. In relation to the latter, he asserts the impossibility of an unequivocal doctrine of universalism. He proffers, instead, Christ's descent into hell as a pan-temporal event by which the Gospel confronts all peoples. Proleptic anticipation, then, presumes both the uncertainty of the future of all and the certainty of the coming of the Lord of the church, twin themes which encourage the church to act in the present.

This book surveys an impressive amount of material related to eschatology. Unfortunately, this text, which discusses everything from Parsism to Branch Davidians by way of Joachim of Fiore, sometimes reads in an encyclopaedic manner. Moreover, a thinker as complex as Martin Heidegger is treated within the space of twenty-five lines and the reader is left wondering whether s/he understands the real consequence of Heidegger's thought in relationship to the thesis of the book. Although a synthetic moment is sometimes wanting, *Eschatology* serves as a useful survey and provides the reader with a good lay of the promised land.

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Preaching Luke-Acts

David Schnasa Jacobsen and Günter Wasserberg
Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001.
160 pages, \$23.99 Softcover

Preachers and scholars of preaching should read this excellent book both for its specific help in interpreting Luke-Acts in sermons and as a model of how exegesis and homiletics can work together. Wasserberg offers exegesis. Jacobsen (a creative scholar of the Second Testament in his own right) shows how the preacher can move from exegetical discovery to the sermon. The exegesis and the homiletical suggestions are fully integrated.

The book has a fresh thesis. According to these authors, Luke-Acts is a "grief document," that is, a document that seeks to help Luke's Christian community deal theologically with the grief that accompanies the separation of the Christian community from Judaism. The church,