



Andrew Purves and Charles Partee, *Encountering God, Christian Faith in Turbulent Times*, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. N.P. ISBN: 0664222420

This book is a worthy attempt to mediate between Theology and popular culture. As a Catholic reviewer of this kind of book from another denomination, I found myself continually asking myself how a Protestant reviewer would read a book of Catholic origin in the same bracket. There is a whole, presumed context against which it has to be read.

That said, I found the book heartening and useful in the first section dealing with the emergence of the awareness of, and the thematization into doctrine of, the Incarnation and the Christian, Triune God. It is always encouraging to find those who agree that what we believe is important and identity shaping. Woe to those who construct their own God!

The middle section on justification I found most difficult. The authors are charitable to what they think of as the Catholic position, but I found it difficult to recognise. They seem to be unfamiliar with the Barth-Küng discussion. Their distinction between justification and sanctification seems to empty the former of real content leaving overmuch space for the preacher's *hyll*. Perhaps it highlights the difficulties of taking the juridical model as a starting point. The same could be said for taking double predestination as the starting point of a logical cosmology. After all, Augustine's immediate disciples at Carthage and Orange passed it over in silence out of respect for their master who had been driven into it in his old age by the heat of the Pelagian controversy. There is no awareness of how this is a special case of the divine and human causalities where the word can be applied only analogically, nor of how crypto-physical explanations of relationships are always *less* than personal.

On the other hand, I found encouraging the strong assertion that the Word of God is primarily that made flesh in Christ rather than written



words and the final section on hope consoling and uplifting. Catholic *dubia* aside, I would think that the book succeeds as an example of its *genre*, and if I were a parish minister, could safely recommend it to parish study groups as a solid and helpful introduction to Reformed Theology. Its great merit is that it takes doctrine seriously.

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Trevor Beeson, *Window on Westminster*, London: SCM Press, 2001, pp. 324, £10.95, ISBN 0334 02854X

If theology and ministry are both, inevitably, contextual, the Westminster of which Trevor Beeson writes is certainly a peculiar context for either. These diary entries reflect the eleven years during which Beeson was a Canon of Westminster Abbey – a ‘royal peculiar’ whose *raison d’être*, he says, is to ‘serve the Royal Family’s spiritual needs’ (p133). For the last five of these years, he was also Rector of St Margaret’s – a church whose demolition he had advocated in an earlier book (God clearly has a sense of humour, he reckons) – and Speaker’s Chaplain in the House of Commons, although those encouraged to buy the book by the political caricature on the cover may be disappointed to find more ecclesiastical than political intrigue inside.

The peculiarities of ministry in either the Abbey or Palace of Westminster keep coming through, from the dilemma of how one shares the peace in a service when standing next to the Queen (one bows), to that of whether to lead out the Duchess of Richmond’s parrot (stuffed, and one doesn’t). ‘A long way from Galilee’ indeed, yet there is a familiarity in the frustrations – of energies diverted into trivia, of jealousies and shortcomings among church office-bearers (though exchanging writs for defamation is beyond this reviewer’s experience thus far), and of trying to work with people whose vision is very different from one’s own. I was forcefully, and guiltily, struck by the