

times to tell where a group begins and ends (see, e.g., 230-36). On the whole, the interpreters are presented chronologically, though occasionally there seems to be a certain randomness to the sequence.

Despite the fact that Bray, at a personal level, clearly leans toward a fairly conservative and traditional model of biblical interpretation, he is to be commended for maintaining a reasonably objective and fair attitude toward and evaluation of the more critical interpretational methods. He endeavors to assess their strengths and weaknesses on their own terms as far as possible, without an overtly apologetic or dogmatic agenda. He seems genuinely interested in understanding the history of biblical interpretation according to the dynamics of the respective periods and the developments that took place in both the secular and religious spheres. It can be seen by the attentive observer that biblical interpretation was largely a product of the times and varied according to the prevalent world-view, educational background of the interpreters, and religious, political, and scientific developments taking place during each respective historical period. It is only when Bray gets to the post-modern period that he begins to lose some of his objective distance from his subject and betray his strong bias against sociological methods of interpretation, especially feminist interpretation, and in favor of evangelical, but not fundamentalist, forms of interpretation. He wants the Bible to find a permanent place in the life of the church, directed by the Holy Spirit, and he ends on a note of hope that this may truly happen.

Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present is a very useful tool for understanding the history of biblical interpretation, including the issues, methods, and personalities involved. It offers more than most such surveys, especially in the periods before the Reformation. Most historical surveys touch only briefly on early Christian interpretation, move rapidly through Reformation hermeneutics, then introduce Semler and the historical-critical scholars, giving primary emphasis to the last two centuries. Bray offers a more balanced survey. Without a thorough understanding of the issues relevant to the different periods, it is difficult to explain why biblical interpretation took the routes it did. Bray provides such an understanding. His work is highly recommended to all who are interested in biblical interpretation, but especially to students looking for a single resource that will cover the field of biblical interpretation comprehensively.

Edwin Reynolds

LaRondelle, Hans K. *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible*. Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997. x + 501 pp.

Hans LaRondelle is Professor Emeritus of Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Currently living in retirement in Florida, LaRondelle is known for his cogent writing and careful theology, especially in the area of prophetic interpretation. In this recent

work on understanding end-time prophecies, he has produced what may be his best work yet.

LaRondelle states that his purpose "is to investigate the theological unity of the Hebrew prophecies and the Christian gospel of the New Testament" (489). He does this by using a consistent "*contextual* method of exegesis" that attempts "to bring to light the essential continuity of Israel's end-time prophecies in the prophetic outlook of Jesus, Paul, and John's Apocalypse" (ibid.). He begins by establishing a careful biblical hermeneutic for interpreting apocalyptic prophecies in the NT. He looks at OT apocalyptic, particularly Daniel, noting its essential characteristics, then studies how Christ and Paul interpreted Daniel's prophecies. Their use of Daniel becomes the basis for the hermeneutic he then uses to interpret the book of Revelation, particularly in the light of Daniel, which he calls "the major root of John's apocalypse" (219; cf. 238, 244).

LaRondelle's book does not claim to be a commentary on Revelation, yet that is what the majority of the book turns out to be, albeit a bit selective. At the same time, it is no ordinary commentary. It is a very theological approach to the prophecies of Revelation, looking at them faithfully in the light of the OT Scriptures, especially Daniel, but also using a Christocentric outlook and the "gospel hermeneutic" as "inspired guidelines" for interpreting the OT backgrounds found in Revelation (490). LaRondelle explicitly rejects the philosophical principles of literalism, allegorism, and idealism, preferring to follow a continuous-historical application (490, 315, 319), which he finds consistent with Christ's and Paul's interpretation of Daniel. The result is very satisfactory. One readily observes that LaRondelle has done his homework well, both exegetically and theologically.

In this volume one will find no simplistic solutions proposed, no speculative reconstructions of history or projections regarding the future, but rather a comprehensive theological analysis of the meaning of the text that is as relevant for the present as for the past or the future. This is what a commentary on Revelation ought to be. Though he adheres to a continuous-historical interpretation, LaRondelle does not feel compelled to repeat or reinforce historicist interpretations from the past, unless the evidence of the text in its theological context makes a compelling case. He is quick to dismiss many of these as speculative and not grounded in a theological approach to the text. He proposes alternative interpretations which are rooted in the essential theological message of the book of Revelation.

Having observed some strengths of LaRondelle's work, I would also take note of a few weaknesses. Because his work is well researched and generally theologically sound does not mean that all of his interpretations are equally defensible. One can still find inconsistencies, flawed correspondences, and some poor choices of citations.

La Rondelle has taken inconsistent positions, for example, regarding both the 144,000 and the little scroll of Rev 10. In discussing Rev 7, he first correctly equates the 144,000 with the numberless multitude, asserting that they are "the countless believers in Christ" and "the totality of spiritual Israel among the human race" (149).

Then, with only “the end-time context of Rev. 7” as a basis for doing so, he quickly confines the group to “the worldwide covenant people of God during the final crisis of the Christian age” (150). In Rev 14, without justification, he calls them “the last companions of the Lamb in the church age” (328). Here his apparent failure to see the larger theological role that this group plays as the entire host of the redeemed of all ages—there is no other larger, more complete group of redeemed in the book—has caused him to succumb to an artificial restricting of the 144,000 (the symbol of the numberless multitude before the throne) to a special group limited to the final era. This creates a whole host of theological problems.

In Rev 10 he argues that the scroll in the hand of the mighty Angel is both the scroll that was sealed with seven seals in Rev 5 (198-99) and the part of the book of Daniel that was sealed until the time of the end (199). To be the seven-sealed scroll of Rev 5, which he says is the book of the covenant or the book of destiny (114, 118), would be impossible, since Rev 10 is still in historical time, before the close of probation (204), and the scroll is already open, whereas the scroll of Rev 5 cannot be opened until the seventh seal is broken, which takes place at the great day of God’s wrath (cf. 141). Simple correspondences are not adequate criteria for making interpretations, as he himself has noted (219).

Yet LaRondelle makes other poor correspondences also, resulting in erroneous interpretations. For example, while he faults André Feuillet for drawing a correspondence between Rev 11:2-3 and Luke 21:24, he later draws a correspondence between the Beast from the sea in Rev 13:1-10 and the Beast from the abyss in Rev 17 based on some similarities in expression (300-302). From this he concludes that the Beast of Rev 17 is a later historical phase of the Beast of Rev 13, and it functions after the healing of the deadly wound at the end of the 1260 days, that is, after 1798 (409-10). There is no space here to discuss the complexities of Rev 17, but suffice it to say that LaRondelle fails to distinguish adequately between the Beast and its heads, and to distinguish carefully between historical and eschatological visions. The Beast of Rev 17 is part of an eschatological vision pertaining to the judgment of Babylon, which takes place under the seventh bowl plague. Only the Beast itself as an eighth king, not the seven historical heads which it follows, is of serious concern in this vision. Thus the heads and horns have no crowns.

In interpreting the number 666, LaRondelle rejects the use of gematria “because John nowhere in the Apocalypse uses gematria as a method” (310), despite the fact that John explicitly states that the number should be calculated—not converted to a symbol—as the number of a man’s name. Any first-century reader should have understood this to point to the use of gematria to determine exactly to whom this number referred. This does not deny any symbolic value the number may have, but neither does a symbolic value deny a real value that may exist. It is usually not what we affirm that creates a problem, but what we deny. The problem with the symbolic value of 666 is that it is just as subjective and speculative as the various results of practicing gematria independent of the rest of the witness of the text. In fact, the use

of gematria is safer, because it is only one of many factors that the text provides to identify the Beast, and when put together, they form an irrefutable whole. The conjectured symbolic value of 666 may seem significant, but it can hardly be used to confirm with certainty the identification of the Beast, which is the implicit purpose of the giving of the number.

LaRondelle gives considerable evidence of a broad familiarity with the current literature on the book of Revelation. Sometimes, however, he seems a little too quick to cite it for support. I seriously question whether he would really agree fully with the sentiments quoted from, for example, Richard Bauckham on p. 230, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza on p. 383, and George R. Beasley-Murray on p. 384.

The book could use some careful editing or proofreading as well. There are many spelling and other mechanical errors and inconsistencies throughout the book that cheapen it. These should be corrected in the likely prospect of another printing.

Despite certain minor weaknesses, this is a book that should be required reading for every serious course on the book of Revelation, and every serious student of Revelation should have a dog-eared copy in his or her library.

Edwin Reynolds

Mosher, Steve. *God's Power, Jesus' Faith, and World Mission: A Study in Romans*.
Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1996. 360 pp.

Steve Mosher holds a Ph.D. degree in New Testament and has served as a missionary in the Philippines for eight years. In this book he combines his academic and missionary backgrounds well. His missionary spirit has been revealed in his use of simple English for those who read it only as a second language. This was a boon for me.

In this thematic commentary Mosher tries to show how Paul developed three themes in Romans: God's power, Jesus' faith, and world mission. He divides the Epistle to the Romans into thirty-four passages, approximately ten to fifteen verses each. This facilitates sermon making and other forms of sharing. Mosher finds 1:16-17 to be the source for the basic thematic message that he wants to develop. He believes that he had an illumination from God in seeing the three themes he found in 1:16-17 (16). He also believes that they are clues to the broad interpretation of the letter to the Romans.

Mosher's theological starting point can be seen in his emphasis that Paul meant the "faith of Jesus" rather than "faith in Jesus." Paul's teaching, Mosher observes, is full of the new faith that Jesus introduced. Rom 3:21-31 is discussed under the title "God's Righteous Power, Jesus' Faith, and World Mission." Perhaps it is the only passage besides 1:16-17 where the reader can clearly see these three themes coming together. "Christ's faith, not our faith in Christ, plays the pivotal role. As a