

controlled by Persia or biblical Iran. Hence, the discussion on Syria is in the sixth chapter.

Palestine again featured heavily in the first century with the New Testament and events in the life of Jesus. However, under the auspices of Roman rule and law, Paul, who dominates the New Testament narratives after Jesus in the Gospels, carried out his evangelistic and missionary work, rapidly expanding the borders of the church in the territories of Cyprus, Asia Minor, Greece, Malta, and Italy. These comprise the last five chapters.

Several features stand out in this expansive volume: (1) To be certain, there are several works of this nature but this surpasses them in terms of scope and breath; (2) it is well researched, evidencing extensive dialogue with scholarship; (3) it is filled with details that relate to the biblical story, and while not theological, helps the reader to understand things related to theology; (4) it is well illustrated, with hundreds of pictures and full-color maps; (5) it is user-friendly with its Scripture, general and map indices allowing easy access to details in the book. Perhaps the one disappointment is that it lacks a chapter on Ancient Iraq, since Babylon is important in the Bible.

This book is useful for pastors, students and teachers as an invaluable resource for a better understanding of the Bible. I recommend it in the superlative.

Kenneth D. Mulzac

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. 219 pp.

Robert E. Webber is Myers Professor of Ministry at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, and president of the Institute for Worship Studies. He has written 40 books on worship and the church and edited *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (StarSong, 1994), a multivolume encyclopedia of more than 3,700 pages.

In *Ancient-Future Evangelism* Webber deals with the roots and historical development of the Christian faith and how these might mold an authentic faith in our post-Christian world. The focus is on understanding discipleship, spiritual formation, and evangelism. After the introductory chapter, "The Way New Christians Have Been Formed" (17-37), in which Webber gives a brief but insightful historical overview of how converts were formed in the New Testament, the book is divided into two parts. The first comprises chapters 2-6.

In the second chapter, "Make Disciples" (41-54), Webber aligns discipleship with conversion and shows how converts were grown in the early church. This enveloped a fourfold procedure that included (1) evangelism, (2) discipleship, (3) spiritual formation, and (4) Christian vocation. These constituted important rites of passage where the seeker progressed from initial conversion to instruction in the faith, overcoming evil in his/her personal life, and the daily practice of Christianity.

Chapters 3-6 each develop one of these important elements. In dealing with "Evangelism" (55-69), Webber argues persuasively that in view of our highly individualistic age, building the life of the Christian community and reaching out to others through social networking should be key elements in the church's ministry and witness. With regards to "Discipleship" (70-87), he clearly shows how the New Testament church, through its preaching and worship, provided an atmosphere where new converts could grow through "believing, belonging and behaving" (72). Through communion with God and community with each other, the daily walk of the Christian is molded. Chapter 5, "Spiritual Formation" (88-102), shows how a correct understanding and practice of baptism, as well as the dynamic preaching of Christ as Victor over evil, can both change and deepen the spiritual life of new congregants. The last chapter in part one, "Christian Vocation" (103-18), focuses on calling Christians to live out a life of service for the Lord, the church, and the world. A section on the teaching and the meaning of the Eucharist is also included.

In part two, consisting of chapters 7-9, Webber attempts to explain the cultural and theological background to current practices in evangelism and discipleship. In "The World We Evangelize" (123-36), he discusses the church's message in a post-Christian world. In some respects, Christians in the twenty-first century face similar challenges to those faced by the Early Church with regards to the pluralism and superstition that permeated Roman culture. The modern church is called upon to both stand over against culture and make connections with it.

Webber first traces the mission and message of Jesus as depicted both by the biblical writers and the early Church Fathers in "The Story We Tell" (137-52). He then discusses themes such as the Creation and fall, redemption, eschatology and re-creation. The main idea is the overall purpose of God's restoration of a broken relationship with fallen humankind. The final chapter, "The Church That Tells the Story" (153-64), deals with the theological basis for the mission of the church and how it witnesses for God in a post-Christian era. Imbued with the life of God, the Church is called to provide a divine community in which new Christians are conceived, nurtured, and sent forth to proclaim God's saving mission to others.

I did not find the second part of the book on the cultural and theological aspects of the postmodern world to be as insightful as part one. Although it might serve as a good introduction to this emerging field, other books that deal specifically with this topic will probably need to be consulted. Despite this reservation, there are many other things that highly recommend this book: its readability; thought-provoking insights; excellent summaries and discussion questions at the end of each chapter; and its appendixes, notes, bibliography and index, all of which ensure easy access to information. This is an excellent textbook for college or introductory graduate level study on the spiritual and historical aspects of evangelism, as well as a thoughtful guide to pastors and church leaders who want to deepen their own lives and the life of the church.

James H. Park