

theology—a theology which emphasizes the synergy of faith and works in a way that the Protestant reformers would probably have highly questioned. Likewise, Lefèvre's quest for the "prophetic-literal sense" (as H. Oberman terms it) is quite distant from the later Protestant emphasis on the historical meaning.

Hughes discusses the relationship between Lefèvre and Luther and between Lefèvre and Farel, but he somehow remains quite silent on the links between Lefèvre and Zwingli. He sees the French evangelical movement as very autochthonous. Perhaps Lefèvre's influence on Luther is less than what Hughes claims to find. But there is no question, of course, that through the group of Meaux, Lefèvre had a deep and wide-ranging influence.

At a time when in ecumenical discussions the idea is often heard that the Reformers should have given the church more time to reform itself from within, it is valuable to read Hughes's summary of the grounds for the condemnation of Lefèvre and of Pierre Caroli. Nowhere does there appear the least hint of acceptance of even the most moderate evangelical ideas.

This volume by Hughes provides indeed interesting reading and many valuable insights. Moreover, in order to understand the complex terrain in which the Protestant reformation found its roots, one can hardly find a better starting point than Lefèvre d'Étaples.

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Kimball, William R. *What the Bible Says About the Great Tribulation*. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Publishing Co., 1983. x + 291 pp. (Reprint ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984. Paperback, \$7.95.)

William Kimball, President of the Disciples Indeed Training Center of South Lake Tahoe, offers us in this publication an exegetical study of Jesus' prophetic discourse in Mark 13, Matt 24-25, and Luke 21. His book engages itself with the teachings of dispensationalism which include emphasis on a future seven-year period of great tribulation in the whole world before the final Judgment. Kimball's motivating question is, "Are the *signs of the times* pointing to a final period of unprecedented chaos referred to in the Bible as the Great Tribulation?" (p. ix). In seeking to answer this question, he challenges the legitimacy of expecting any "signs" which announce the imminency of Christ's second advent.

One must, first of all, give credit to Kimball's intention. This book is an endeavor to present as clear and unbiased an interpretation of Christ's prophetic words as possible, and to do contextual justice to the "intended meaning, application, and timing of the Lord's statements" (p. 3). In this brief review, I can only point out that Kimball places the major emphasis on Christ's purpose "to alert that very generation of believers of the approaching holocaust awaiting Jerusalem" (p. 10). The predicted "great tribulation" (or distress) of Matt 24:21 is interpreted, not as an end-time event, but as the terrible calamity attending the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, from which the disciples of Jesus could escape just in time. The quotations of Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37/38-ca. 100) in chap. 11 impressively underscore the reality of the horrendous distress of Jerusalem for that generation of Jews.

On the other side of the matter, Kimball insists strongly on the interpretation that "the sign of the Son of man in heaven" in Matt 24:30 intends to express the literal and glorious return of Christ from heaven to earth (chap. 18). This "sign," he feels, does *not* refer to a figurative coming in judgment in A.D. 70.

A problem for Kimball's thesis appears to be posed by Matt 24:29-30, where the second advent of Christ is said to take place "*immediately* after the distress." This statement seems to support the idea of a strict end-time setting for the "tribulation," which will "then" (vs. 30) be consummated by the second coming of Christ. Kimball states that the Greek word *tote* ("then") in Matt 24:30 can mean a specific time or "can be used in a far more general sense to indicate the sequence in which a series of events will happen" (p. 178). The focus here, he claims, is on the *order* of events in Matt 24—"1) tribulation upon the nation of Israel; 2) followed immediately by an extended period characterized by unrest and instability among the nations; and 3) *then* ending with the second coming of Christ in power and glory" (p. 178).

The weak point in Kimball's interpretation is the method he uses: He interprets Matthew and Mark, not by their own context and style, but by Luke's account (concerning this hermeneutic, see my article "Did Jesus Intend to Return in the First Century?", *The Ministry*, May 1983, pp. 10-13). The problem becomes evident when Kimball continues his analysis by spiritualizing the signs in the sun, moon, and stars (chap. 17). With regard to this cosmic imagery, he interprets the darkening of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars in a purely symbolic way "to characterize the destruction befalling nations and earthly powers" (p. 166). Also, the expression "and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matt 24:29, last part, RSV) he views as "a subtle characterization of the ongoing conflict of truth clashing with and undermining the powers of evil in the

earth" (p. 167; he appeals here to Eph 6:12, 13). In other words, Christ's cosmic imagery refers to the historical conflict between his church and the evil powers in the air. Kimball further equates this shaking of "the powers of the heavens" with the "times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21:24.

In this process, the immediate context becomes more and more neglected, while appeals are made to other contexts. Moreover, why must the "heavenly" powers of Matt 24:30 be seen as symbols of the "earthly" nations in Luke 21:25 (p. 158)? Why is there any need to *spiritualize* plain words in Christ's discourse, which Kimball himself insists, on the other hand, must be taken all the way *literally*? It seems strange to consider Luke 21:25 suddenly as an "obvious figurative expression" (p. 159). Also, Kimball's appeal to the clearly symbolic vision of Rev 17:15 and its symbolic waters of Babylon cannot be mixed with Christ's non-symbolic discourse on his literal return in glory from the cosmic heavens. These are two different genres or types of literature in Scripture, each of which possesses its own characteristics. The use of similar cosmic imagery in the OT seems to carry the clear theological message that the "Day of the Lord" is coming as the Judgment-day for all nations.

Kimball's specific burden, as already mentioned, is to show that Christ's discourse is devoted to only preliminary signs of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, supplying *not one* sign to measure the imminency of the second advent of Christ. He views Christ's announcement that the second coming will be "as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west" as containing "the strong implication" that there will be no preliminary signs to herald his final return (p. 154). Also, he believes that Matt 24:36 ("No one knows about that day or hour . . .") supports this concept.

In spite of my foregoing criticism, I feel that we are nevertheless greatly indebted to Kimball for his challenging and thought-provoking study on Matt 24-25 and the parallel chapters in Mark and Luke. Much can be learned from his stimulating Bible study. For instance, it is hard to find a better explanation of the proverbial saying, "Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather" (Matt 24:28) than that given by him in chap. 16: namely, that this saying expresses the certainty that God would *not* come to deliver the nation of Israel, but would come rather with devastating judgments to a nation in such spiritual decay.

Above all, Kimball's stress on Christ's warning to be *spiritually* prepared for his return is extremely beneficial (chap. 23). His focus on a Christ-centered waiting, instead of event-centered chronological calculations, is also a welcome corrective to some modern outlines of Christ's prophetic discourse. The real threat for the end-time church is not external tribulation or wars of persecution, but the corrosive influences of "dissipa-

tion, drunkenness and the anxieties of life" (Luke 21:34)—the "danger of self-indulgence, prosperity, materialism, idleness, lukewarmness, carelessness and indifference" (p. 255).

Kimball's volume is an important book on Matt 24 that cannot be ignored. It comes to us with penetrating questions, and—for most of us, undoubtedly—with a new perspective.

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Knight, George A. F. *Servant Theology: A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 40-55*. International Theological Commentary. [2d] rev. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans/Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1984. ix + 204 pp. Paperback, \$5.95.

This revised edition of Knight's commentary, first published in 1965, will enable a new generation of students and pastors to benefit from its many theological insights into Isa 40-55. In accordance with the International Theological Commentary series, the volume seeks to move beyond the historical and literary analysis of the text in order to develop its theological themes and to indicate their relevance for the Christian church world-wide. Moreover, this particular volume shares its approach with Knight's earlier volume, *A Christian Theology to the Old Testament* (1959, 1964²), by emphasizing the special relationship between the OT and NT, along with a specifically Christian reading of the OT.

According to Knight, Deutero-Isaiah (DI), to whom chaps. 40-55 are attributed, was a "theological giant" raised up by God in the latter half of the sixth century B.C., during the Babylonian captivity. Indeed, he is considered by Knight to be "the greatest theologian that has ever arisen" (p. 199), whose key contribution to biblical faith was the "insistence that the living Word of the living God began to be united—though still in a proleptic sense—with the very flesh of God's son Israel at that specific time in which DI himself was participating" (p. 5). That central theme is introduced in Isa 40, which presents the durability of God's Word (God himself), followed by a delineation of the missionary task assigned to Israel and for which she was prepared through suffering. The theme is developed further, not by means of theological propositions, but through a consideration of God's acts in history, which reach a climax in the appointment of Cyrus to accomplish Israel's redemption from servitude.

Central to Knight's argument are the identity and function of the servant. Here Knight follows H. Wheeler Robinson, C. North, and J. Muilenburg. The sinful, imperfect servant (Israel) merges with the perfect