

Knight deals with women's rights and abolitionism as social issues rather than political issues. This is a minor historical criticism, and due to the nature of the book and its page limitations, it was probably not feasible to go further into the political arena.

Another aspect that would have been helpful to the serious student of history would have been to include a bibliography with further readings, and footnotes. For the reader interested in researching more in depth about the nineteenth century as related to Ellen White, another useful volume is *The World of Ellen White*, edited by Gary Land (Review and Herald, 1987). This publication brought together fourteen scholars (one of whom was George R. Knight). Knight's book shows the connection between Ellen White's world and her views more frequently and closely than does the earlier work.

Ellen White is introduced on p. 16. From that point on, one valuable feature of the book is that Knight ends each section by comparing Ellen White's views to those of the thinkers and movers of her day. The author shows where Ellen White was influenced by her contemporaries as well as where she disagreed with them. For example, she agreed with other reformers of health when they advocated clean living and natural remedies, but disagreed with their view that these reforms would bring about an earthly millennial kingdom (36). In fact, as Seventh-day Adventists hold, yet she did believe that these reforms were an aid to individuals to prepare heart and mind for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This borrowing of good ideas, and rejecting harmful practices of the day, helped to characterize her gift. This also gave guidance to the early Sabbatarian Adventists and contributed to the formation of doctrines and practices still held today.

Knight paints a broad picture of life in the late 1880s, using popular literature and carefully placed pictures to make that world come alive to the reader. In citing many contemporary works from the day, Knight discusses their contents, popular influence, and impact on leading thinkers of the day. For instance, when speaking about nativism and the anti-Catholic feeling that pervaded much of the nineteenth century, Knight cites the work of Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* and explains in two sentences what the book was about (64).

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Kyle, Richard. *The Last Days Are Here Again*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. 255 pp. Paperback, \$14.99.

Richard Kyle, professor of history and religion at Tabor College, and author of *The Religious Fringe* and *The New Age Movement in American Culture*, begins by telling how what he believed to be a "sign" of the imminent end, the Suez Crisis of 1956, frightened him as a youth. If this book is any indication, that early experience gave him a healthy skepticism about alarmist predictions, and an enduring interest in eschatology and apocalyptic.

Some may find the ironic tone of the title annoying, but it accurately reflects the tone of the entire book, so be warned. This reviewer finds it part of a refreshing and balanced attitude, eminently suited to the author's purpose, "to

promote a sensible perspective of the end times" (11), a desperately needed antidote to the tidal wave of hysterical end-time books among which it has emerged.

Rather than yet another volume ominously warning of the imminent end of all things, Kyle's book provides what he terms a "descriptive history" of millenarian and apocalyptic thinking. True to his purpose, he does not advocate Pre- or Postmillennialism, the rapture, or any particular view of the end times, while candidly stating his own background on the very first page. Instead he describes the rise and spread of these various views, and their adherents, in history.

Drawing on a wide range of primary and secondary sources (there are forty-one pages of fine-print notes), Kyle effectively demonstrates how contemporary influences, such as the rise of Islam and Viking mythology in medieval times, and the New Age movement and scientific concerns today, color and distort the apocalyptic thinking of the time. By tracking the interplay of historical and cultural forces, Kyle methodically illustrates the truth of Peter Stearns' analogy that apocalyptic visions lie like a dormant virus, breaking out in virulent infection when stimulated by cultural conditions (10).

As Kyle describes them, apocalyptic movements combine a host of contradictory elements. They require both biblical authority and social discontent to give them credibility. Apocalyptic theories are often espoused by those who scorn academia, yet claim advanced degrees themselves, often falsely. Specific predictions increase the interest and excitement in such movements, but make them vulnerable to being disproved. Apocalyptic predictions easily attract adherents and become movements. Such movements must institutionalize to maintain their existence, yet apocalyptic movements and institutions are inherently hostile to each other. I found this last dichotomy most instructive. Two quotes state it most succinctly: "Apocalyptic movements with their charismatic leaders and end-time expectations are usually anti-institutional. Still, if any movement is to survive, it must establish an adequate organizational structure" (35). "Institutionalization usually stifles the apocalyptic mind-set. . . . But any movement must institutionalize to survive" (40). These two statements form the stage upon which the apocalyptic drama will play itself out throughout the rest of the book. Institutions, to be good stewards, must make long-term plans, which conflict with apocalyptic expectations. Those who cherish such expectations begin to view the institution as "the" single force holding back the millennium. Given their frame of reference, it seems almost inevitable that they will come to see this obstructionist institution as "Babylon," an organization which has prostituted its original purpose. A preoccupation with apocalyptic thus serves as a warning of likely conflict with the institution.

The book is full of useful insights, each fully supported by the historical evidence cited. Apocalyptic speculations always draw interest. Even in Jesus' day, people would go out of their way to see the sensational, to see a "reed shaking in the wind." Setting specific dates naturally intensifies interest, but causes the predictor to lose credibility if the predictions fail to materialize. Sooner or later true believers and opportunistic charlatans alike learn to hedge their bets, to appear to be specific while remaining vague. It generates interest (and revenues), and maintains what we have learned to call "plausible deniability."

One way to do this is draw a chart or diagram which seems to indicate the imminence of the apocalypse, back it up with some calculations, and let the audience draw

their own conclusions. It's amazing to ponder the energy and ingenuity expended through the ages to calculate what Jesus told us was incalculable. Some numerical schemes have been discredited repeatedly, yet they resurface with regularity to dupe a new generation and give doubters fresh reason to deny the reality of the Second Coming.

While thorough, this book is neither dry nor dull. Still, in a volume this slim, and with more than two thousand years to cover, some topics receive scant attention. While Kyle explores many nonwestern and nonreligious sources for apocalyptic thinking, I would like to have seen him pay more attention to socialism, communism, and modern science as secular millenarian movements.

Every pastor, administrator, and church leader—indeed, every serious believer—would benefit from the perspective and insights this volume contains. The author's light style may be off-putting to some readers, but in my experience they are precisely the people who need to read it most. All of us sorely need Kyle's balanced message. Repeatedly, throughout history, the most violent apocalyptic movements have focused on the Antichrist. "Christians were called then and are called now to focus on Christ, not the signs of the times" (200). If we know Christ, we will recognize him when he comes.

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Lang, Bernhard. *Sacred Games: A History of Christian Worship*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 448 pp. Hardcover, \$40.00.

Referring to Romano Guardini's definition of worship as like "the play of the child and the life of art . . . [with] no purpose but . . . full of profound meaning," Lang, Professor of Religion at the University of Paderborn, Germany, identifies six "sacred games" around which he describes the history of Christian worship. The six chapters of his book follow these six forms of worship.

Praise composed of singing or saying good things about God has the primacy over other forms of worship. Starting with the basic Psalms, but also with a reference to Homer's *Iliad*, the author reviews the tradition of praise from communal poetic recitations in monasteries and convents to the praise form of more modern individual testimonies in Puritan and then Evangelical circles.

Prayer said or sung stems from two historical roots: the regular practice of the community and the occasional meeting at times of crisis. Three questions are here discussed: who is praying? What are the god(s) asked for? How does God answer the prayer? The classic Lord's prayer, "Our Father," is studied phrase by phrase. Its Jewish background is found in the Jewish prayer of the *Amida* (the eighteen benedictions), yet it originates with John the Baptist whom this study assumes to be the author. The discussion on prayer seesaws between focus on Providence, the God who answers or not the prayer, and the human experience of prayer per se.

Sermons expounded on the basis of sacred scriptures are a characteristic and unique feature of Israel in the Mediterranean world. Jews and Christians are thus defined as a "textual community." From Luke the "successful charismatic preacher," through the reformer Luther and the neoorthodox Karl Barth, up to the currents of contemporary liberal Protestantism, the author identifies three great preaching traditions: The one that imparts theological salvation knowledge (the