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Book Notes

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BOOK NOTES

Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Silence of Angels*. Trinity Press, 1995. ISBN 1-56338-131-1, paper, 133 pp.

Dale Allison, a research associate at Friends University, Wichita, Kansas, has written a series of essays about spirituality in the modern world. These essays constitute social commentary from a Christian theological/philosophical perspective. Allison offers many thoughtful observational insights, such as: “secularization correlates directly with a growing physical separation from the so-called natural world” (p. 6), and, with Pascal, that “the *logos* was to be heard in the silence, the divine fire beheld in the darkness,” a silence and a darkness made more difficult in our technological age (p. 33). The true silence of spirit is made difficult in contemporary life, typified by media, which can’t bear a moment of it. No deep roots remain for most people, hence no heroes known for accomplishments but just thousands of celebrities known only for being known. This is a book made even more readable by striking poetic metaphors that bathe the themes in light.

Douglas Gwyn, *Words in Time*. Kimo Press, 1989-97, paper, ISBN 0-945177-14-3, 131 pp.

Friends familiar with Gwyn’s other books will find reiteration of themes developed in *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism*, and in *Apocalypse of the Word*. Some essays in the current volume by a Pendle Hill scholar are drawn from previous journal articles or study guides. Gwyn stresses the importance of covenant in science, in politics, and most importantly, in human-divine relationships. This sense of holy covenant is an essential part of the Quaker witness, he believes, and ought to be recovered.

Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1999. ISBN 0-06-064282-3, 210 pp.

After a barrage of books and television shows aimed at rationalizing contemporary unbelief within the Church, it’s a breath of fresh air to read Johnson’s latest book. Buy it and read it! It is a sequel to a previous, equally evocative book, *The Real Jesus*, which constituted a careful refutation of the scholarship of unbelief. In *Living Jesus*,

Johnson, a biblical scholar at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, outlines and articulates the essentials of Christianity. He certainly has not bowed the scholarly knee to Baal. As Yale scholar Miroslav Volf says: "Johnson demonstrates that the 'living Jesus' of the biblical traditions is immensely more fascinating and significant than any of the 'dead Jesuses' that the quests for the historical Jesus keep producing."

It is anticipated that a future issue of *Quaker Religious Thought* (probably #94) will review a decade of scholarship revolving around the third quest for the historical Jesus. Johnson's books will certainly be included as insightful commentaries on this subject.

Gabriel Fackre, *Restoring the Center: Essays Evangelical and Ecumenical*. InterVarsity Press, 1998. ISBN 0-8308-1508-2, paper, 179 pp.

Fackre, an emeritus professor of theology at Andover Newton Theological School, has assembled a set of essays focusing upon an emerging centrist theology. His historical model is the Barmen Declaration of 1934, when the confessing churches of Germany remonstrated against Hitler's cultural captivity of the Church. As one of America's senior theologians, Fackre reflects, somewhat passionately, about what the Church has learned over the past fifty years about theology, mission, and ministry. "The hardest lesson of all," he writes, "has to do with the seductability of the church to current fashions and our forgetfulness about the *durable* goods of the gospel." (p. 24) In spite of reductionism of the gospel evidenced in both right and left denominations, Fackre is optimistic. He finds signs of recentering in mainline denominations and local churches, in the seminaries, and in ecumenical convergences. He calls both evangelical and mainline churches to account for compromises with culture. In affirming both the reality of angels and the resurrection of the body, Fackre asserts a Christian worldview against a secular one, crediting postmodernism for at least unshackling us from the chains of the Enlightenment. His reaffirmation of Reformation/Quaker emphasis upon ordinary work as ministry is refreshing in an era of professionalism; so is his emphasis upon central, historic Christian doctrines. The resurrection, both Christ's and ours, he declares, is once again ontologically assertable and not just confessionally proper. This book will be instructive to Quakers who are, also, groping for the center.

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Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again: A History of the End Times*. Baker, 1998. ISBN 0-8010-5809-0, 255 pp.

This short study by a Tabor College professor of history is an excellent book for persons seeking an intelligent and articulate guide through the wilderness of hype and hysteria in the countdown associated with our calendar flipping to the year 2000. He details the various end time theories in Christianity and in other religions. He deals with popular hot topics as the rapture, the mark of the beast, and other apocalyptic images, noting secular as well as religious efforts to set up timetables for the end of the world. This would be an excellent book for a study group. It is fun to read. This editor has used this book in an Elderhostel conference dealing with the significance of millennium events.