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Review--Quaker Religious Thought, no. 82

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The Spirit . . . [calls us] to self-critical reflection on our relationship of interdependence with creation and the whole of humankind. (§I:23)

In many parts of the world common confession of faith would involve much more than agreement on creeds and church orders . . . [it] would involve transformation of culture and power structures in accord with the spirit of the Gospel [in a search which has to be made] along with people of other faiths and non-believers as well. (§II:21)

The broader notion of sacramentality helps us to conceive the relation between the particular sacraments and life in its entirety. While all of creation and the whole of human life may by God's grace be open to the saving presence of God, the particular sacraments indicate and embody redemption, which is necessary . . . before life can be lived in the *koinonia* with God and among humans which is God's purpose for humankind and the creation. (§III:6)

The Quaker "escape clause" regarding sacraments, incorporated at the Canberra Assembly of the World Council by Canadian Friend Barbara Bazett—now a member of the WCC Central Committee—was reiterated. Originally adopted at Montreal in 1963, it reads: "we gladly acknowledge that some who do not observe these rites share in the spiritual experience of life in Christ."

The conference agreed that *koinonia* in relation to ethics does not mean designing codes and rules but being "a place where the Gospel tradition is probed constantly for moral inspiration and insight." (§IV:30) And, "while corporate witness is desirable . . . there are times when an individual or group of Christians may be called to take an alternative position . . ." (§IV: 31) The conference asserted that it is also "essential for our churches to recognize that the threat to our creation is enormous and that the tasks before us are urgent" (§IV:34), and that in discussing the relationship between justice and ecology all voices should be heard, especially relative to issues of power, as noted thus:

The Power of the Reign of God is displayed in self-giving love and in living the truth in word and deed. Such sacrificial love [sometimes] leads to the cross; yet, the Power of the Resurrection makes possible courageous truth-telling and committed action on behalf of the poor and for the sake of the creation. (§IV:37)

REVIEW

Dale Aukerman. *Reckoning with Apocalypse: Terminal Politics and Christian Hope*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993; viii + 250 pp. incl. Index of Biblical References, ISBN 0-8245-1243-X.

Reviewed by Anne Olsen

In *Reckoning with Apocalypse* Dale Aukerman carefully examines the biblical basis of apocalypse, helping the reader understand what is meant by end time prophecy.

Aukerman does an excellent job in identifying popular misconceptions and revealing weaknesses present in many theologies of impending apocalypse. He does this by treating Scripture as a whole, with its beginning in Judaism and its culminating in Christianity. Biblical references are explained in context.

After a brief introduction to Christian foundations, two main points are examined. First, Aukerman describes the problems our society faces, such as violence, the nuclear threat, and environmental concerns. He exposes the weaknesses of using these problems to support predictions that the end of the world is imminent. He also presents a thoughtful analysis of how Christians misconstrue apocalyptic beliefs in order to support certain political positions and lifestyles. This human interpretation of apocalypse is replaced with a biblical view that centers on faith in God as revealed by Jesus.

The second point aims to give the reader hope for the future. Beginning with a presentation of God as judge, Aukerman exposes "weaknesses" in individuals, society, and churches. He shows the folly of relying on human government for security and protection, and challenges us to reorient ourselves to trust in God alone. Aukerman argues that we misunderstand Scriptures if we use them to support employing evil means to combat evil. He challenges the reader to follow Christ's lead and rely wholly upon God.

Although much of the book focuses on what is wrong with society, particularly in the United States, the reader is not left to despair. The last chapters encourage us by proclaiming hope in the reality of God as our unshakable foundation. The people of God are presented as a gentle people who rely solely on Him. It is God who will deliver His people from their enemies.

The greatest strength of this book is the author's ability to link Scripture with current events, politics, the faith and practice of established

churches, and the actions of individuals. This was done using many scriptural references. Generally he was careful to explain the content of biblical verses used, making strong connections between faith in Jesus Christ and how disciples act.

Although linking the Bible and theology to current affairs is Aukerman's strength, it is also a source of weakness. Sometimes statements about events were presented as fact without supporting documentation, e.g., statements about United States participation in the Iraq war. I would have appreciated the same thorough footnoting for this section that was provided for most of the book.

A book so thoroughly footnoted, with an index to scriptural references, should have included a bibliography and general index.

Readers familiar with Quaker faith will recognize similarities between Aukerman's portrayal of apostolic faith and that proclaimed by George Fox in the 1600s. First, and most important, is the call to follow Christ and completely trust God. This echoes Fox's emphasis on Christ as active presence in the lives of His followers. Another similarity is to connect faith and works. Quakers affirm putting faith into action.

Aukerman challenges Friends to examine our faith, both individual and corporate. His statement, "The world is headed for catastrophe, even terminal catastrophe, because of the general failure of the churches to be what God intends" (p. 175) is an ominous prophecy for all to hear.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with its conclusions, the book definitely is worth reading—for the questions asked, the challenge presented, and the careful analysis of the Christian faith.