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Books in Review

Briefly Noted

- The Democracy Reader: Classic And Modern Speeches, Essays, Poems, Declarations And Documents On Freedom And Human Rights Worldwide
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- The Chief Rabbi, The Pope, And The Holocaust
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The Democracy Reader: Classic And Modern Speeches, Essays, Poems, Declarations And Documents On Freedom And Human Rights Worldwide. Edited by Diane Ravitch and Abigail Thernstrom. *HarperCollins. 330 pp. $35.*

A very useful anthology of almost a hundred readings. Regrettably, the editors jump from Aristotle to sixteenth-century Europe with only one brief stop at Aquinas. This grievously distorts the development of Jewish and Christian ideas fundamental to democratic governance, such as human dignity, the relationship between individual and community, the moral ambiguity of power, the pervasiveness of sin, the relationship between sacred and profane authority, and the purposefulness of history. The result is that democracy appears as a *deus ex moderna*, and almost entirely a secular phenomenon. That description of things is no less deplorable for its being so common among intellectuals in the West. Because the editors are not known as champions of what today is called "multiculturalism," it is the more surprising that Chinese and African reflections on democracy receive more attention than the Judeo-Christian tradition. (Since the editors have, offering rather strained reasons, included Nietzsche, they might have heeded his counsel, "The democratic movement is the heir of the Christian movement." He was opposed to both, of course.) Nonetheless, this is a valuable, even if historically and conceptually skewed, collection of statements on the nature and importance of democracy.

The Harvest Of Humanism In Central Europe. Edited by Manfred P. Fleischer. *Concordia. 389 pp. $19.95.*

Essays by younger American and European scholars in honor of Lewis W. Spitz, the distinguished Reformation historian at Stanford. The focus is on the interaction of Renaissance humanism and Reformation theology as refracted through the legacies of Luther, Calvin, and Loyola. The book is a very welcome and scholarly antidote to discussions of Western culture that skip from the

Reformation to the Enlightenment (or, even more commonly, from Aristotle to Hume).

Practice In Christianity. By Soren Kierkegaard. *Princeton University Press. 416 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Translated and with an introduction by Howard and Edna Hong, of course. If anybody has done more than the Hongs of St. Olaf College to sustain interest in Kierkegaard over the last several decades, we don't know who it might be. The current volume includes a number of fragments and expositions, among the most interesting being SK's reflections on the "impossibility of direct communication" and the consequent suffering of Christian existence.

The Christian Faith. By Ernst Troeltsch. *Fortress. 310 pp. $19.95 paper.*

A distinguished addition to "Fortress Texts in Modern Theology," this very readable translation of Troeltsch's *Glaubenslehre* is a gift to the English-speaking theological world. Troeltsch (d. 1923) is a giant of Protestant thought who significantly shaped liberal religious understandings of the relationship between church and world. He also believed it was Protestantism's mission to challenge and displace what he viewed as the doleful mystifications of Catholicism.

The Awakening Church: 25 Years Of Liturgical Renewal. Edited by Lawrence J. Madden, S.J. *The Liturgical Press. 140 pp. $9.95 paper.*

Collected reflections of some of those chiefly responsible for liturgical changes since the Second Vatican Council. The recommendations tend to endorse more of the same, and there is slight consideration of alternative definitions of "renewal." But a useful documentation of attitudes in the liturgical-studies guild, Protestant and Catholic.

The New Medicine: Life And Death After Hippocrates. By Nigel M. De S. Cameron. *Crossway. 187 pp. $11.95 paper.*

Directing himself to an evangelical audience, the author takes up questions such as physician-assisted suicide and examines what they mean for the future of medical ethics, indeed for the future of medicine. The cover carries this testimonial from Richard John Neuhaus: "*The New Medicine* is a persuasive manifesto that should be welcomed by those who have the courage to join a movement of reform aimed at restoring medicine to its healing mission." Neuhaus tells us he never gives testimonials that he does not mean.

A Wideness In God's Mercy: The Finality Of Christ In A World Of Religions. By Clark H. Pinnock. *Zondervan. 216 pp. $14.99 paper.*

A noted evangelical Protestant theologian, who has more than once surprised his colleagues by the developments in his thought, makes a vigorous case for a "generous" biblical reading of the eternal destination of those who have not heard or who in this life rejected the Gospel. His title, drawn from Faber's famous hymn, sets the tone for an argument that intends to affirm and in no way to belittle the Christian missionary mandate. (For similar argument on the Catholic theological front see the comment on John Paul II's encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, in First Things, October 1991.)

The Theology Of Henri De Lubac. By Hans Urs Von Balthasar. *Ignatius Press. 127 pp. $9.95 paper.*

One theological giant, von Balthasar, offers a winsome appreciation of another, de Lubac. Over a very long career, de Lubac was hemmed in by hyper-orthodox "integrists" and, later, by progressivists (whose only church fathers, says von Balthasar, were named Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche). Von Balthasar persuasively argues that, through his more than forty books and numerous collaborative efforts, de Lubac left a legacy of intellectual nobility that deserves to be a lasting influence in Christian theology.

The Secularization Of Sin. By Richard K. Fenn. *Westminster. 199 pp. $14.95 paper.*

The Professor of Christianity and Society at Princeton Theological Seminary has written an exceedingly literate and exceedingly curious book. The answer to the problems of sin, guilt, and self-sacrifice, he sometimes says quite clumsily, is "getting in touch with our true selves." At other times, he offers more graceful and persuasive insights into the ways that clergy and laity make one another miserable by claiming moral debts that can never be satisfactorily paid. The more theologically minded will wonder how Fenn's ponderings connect with classical Christian teachings about, for instance, atonement and forgiveness.

Made In U.S.A.: The Secret Histories Of The Things That Made America. By Phil Patton. *Grove Weidenfeld. 401 pp. $24.95.*

Thomas Jefferson designed the writing desk on which he wrote the Declaration of Independence. "If then things acquire a superstitious value because of their connection with particular persons," Jefferson wrote, it is possible to envision the desk being "carried in the procession of our nation's birthday, as the relics of the saints are in those of the church." Patton pursues the idiosyncratic, although not implausible, hypothesis that the things that America has made are the "icons" that made America. A whimsical study of an aspect of culture undeservedly neglected.

The Chief Rabbi, The Pope, And The Holocaust. By Robert G. Weisbord and Wallace P. Sillanpoa. *Transaction Books. 231 pp. $34.95.*

In 1945, Israele Zolli, chief rabbi of Rome, converted to Catholicism. He took as his baptismal name Eugenio, in honor of Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli) and all he did to aid Jews during the Holocaust. The authors of this volume insist that Zolli was wrong on all counts. Zolli is desecrated as an apostate and Pacelli is accused of indifference toward the plight of the Jews. A more sympathetic reading of the reasons why the title figures did what they did might have thrown more useful light on this intriguing story, but it remains an intriguing story nonetheless.

What Americans Believe. By George Barna. *Regal Books (Ventura, CA). 309 pp. $14.95 paper.*

Survey research from a distinctly evangelical Protestant perspective. Much interesting data underscoring the strength of "feelgoodism"in popular religion that is marvelously indifferent to the truth, or to whether there is truth in matters spiritual and moral. The author's proposed prescription is that we need much more, and much more evangelical, evangelical Protestantism.