

Crosby, Cindy, ed. *Ancient Christian Devotional*. Gen. ed. Thomas C. Oden. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007. 293 pp. Paper, \$17.00.

There are few books that appeal equally to the imagination and the professional interest of the scholar. The *Ancient Christian Devotional* is one such book. Its format is a year of weekly devotional readings from Scripture and writers from the early church. The intent is to enable the participant to worship God while visualizing at least a part of the worship experience of the formative years of Christian liturgy and spirituality. Thus each weekly set of readings includes a theme and overview of Scripture readings that “generally follow the Lectionary Cycle A” (8), followed by an opening prayer, the first Scripture that is usually an OT passage or from Acts, and patristic reflections on the day’s Scripture. A Psalm of response and a NT passage follow, with attendant reflections from the church fathers and a closing prayer.

No attempt is made to homogenize the prayers and devotions that are presented. In fact, a wide variety is purposefully represented—not as wide and diverse as the whole of the early Christian experiences, but as wide and varied as the generally accepted worship tradition. The readings range from Clement of Rome (ca. 100) and Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 112) to Symeon the New Theologian (ca. 1022) and Theophylact (ca. 1108), with the majority of quotations coming from the third through fifth centuries, reflecting the preponderance of extant writings. Geographically, there is representation from Pachomius on the upper Nile to Columbo and Brigid in the Irish Isles and from Augustine of Hippo in North Africa to John Chrysostom in Antioch and Constantinople. In all, more than eighty authors are represented, a veritable catalogue of good guys and bad guys from the early church. A helpful glossary of biological sketches (283-291) introduces each author.

The diversity of representation from the early church was ensured by the wide variety of modern scholars used to find the more-than-one-hundred prayers from the early church needed to create such a volume. At least eight liturgical sources were utilized, including Phyllis Tickle, *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime*; James Ferguson and Charles L. Wallis, *Prayers for Public Worship: A Service Book of Morning and Evening Prayers Following the Course of the Christian Year*; Richard J. Foster, *Prayers from the Heart*; and Selina Fitzherbert Fox, *A Chain of Prayer Across the Ages: Forty Centuries of Prayer from 2000 B.C.-A.D. 1916*. The liturgical gatherings of J. Robert Wright, Thomas Spidlik, Roger Geffen, and William Bright were also used. To keep both the scholarly integrity and the unencumbered flow of worship thought the citations to these modern works are placed in a separate Prayer Citation list in the back of the book (271-281).

Much more vague is the use of the ancient sources from the Ancient Christian Commentary series, also having Oden as the general editor. A list of which volumes of the series were cited in the present work is included in the back of the book (269, 270), but no attempt was made to identify which citations were actually used. One is left to assume that an exhaustive list would have been too cumbersome even for an appendix. There is no indication other than this as to where Crosby found her ancient quotes to

use in this devotional, but given the proximity of the shared publisher and the same general editor it is probable that most, if not all, of them come from the commentary series. As such, this work shares both the strengths and weaknesses of the series. One is drawn in by the rich diversity of connections to fellow Christians throughout the ages, while at the same time frustrated by the lack of context of the sometimes cryptic quotes. Also, as in the commentary series, the vague method of referencing—giving only the title of the ancient work cited—makes it difficult to locate the quote in the original source for further investigation.

The first Christian commentary (the Gospel of Mark) to be published was not cited at all in this present work. This is, no doubt, following the patristic lead of giving Matthew priority, followed by John. As in the Lectionary and several florilegium Gospel commentaries of late antiquity, all gospel readings come from Matthew except when a pericope is found only in the other Gospels. Thus John, having the most independent material, is second most frequent in use. A Lukan passage is used only twice: the exclusive birth narrative in Luke 2 (35) and the road to Emmaus story of Luke 24 (113). This is the kind of awareness that allows one to visualize the biblical material from a perspective more similar to that of the early Fathers.

The reflections themselves read like a florilegium when taken together, allowing the reader to see some of the best of spiritual commentary that the early church has to offer. I used this devotional in personal worship last spring from Epiphany through Lent to Easter. The experience enabled me to see the spiritual side of many of the authors that I generally study from a theological and ecclesiological angle. Some authors who are cranky and downright ornery when in church political or theological battle become much more well-rounded characters when standing together with them before God in worship. Ambrose of Milan, for instance, seems much more human when overheard in the act of worship (82, 89) than when one is reading of his manipulations of the martyr cults to enhance the authority of the bishops. Novation, who is usually my least favorite author, reflects similarly to me when speaking of submission to the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being changed in sanctification (177). Scholars can benefit professionally from using such a devotional: to see those historical figures that are the objects of our study as being erring, yet worshiping, humans like ourselves.

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Grindheim, Sigurd. *The Crux of Election: Paul's Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel*, WUNT 202. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. 280 pp. Paper, €49,00.

This book is remarkable for its broad coverage of secondary literature and fresh insights. The author's expertise in the OT and Second Temple Judaism is especially impressive.

The introduction sets forth the thesis of the book, which is, as the title suggests, that Paul critiques Jewish confidence in Israel's election based on