

no mention of God (except for an allusion in 8:6)' (p. 481). A curious reader, who does not know Hebrew, may search for the explanation of the allusion to no avail, because neither the text nor the commentary says anything about it. Similarly, the statement, 'The allegorical exegesis begun in the New Testament . . .' (p. 488), which is grounded in the considerations of the preceding paragraph, seems rather unconvincing. What is more, even though both introductory parts give a clear and positive presentation of knowledge, which is an advantage, the authors do not mention any moot points or questions which still await an answer. As a result, they create the impression that everything is well-known and obvious. Yet the lack of questions and the absence of discussion may limit to some extent the intellectual horizons of the readers.

The final evaluation of the book depends, naturally, on what we expect from it. If our personal purpose accords with the words on the cover, 'the commentaries, or notes, help to explain the doctrinal and practical meaning of the scriptural text, drawing on a rich variety of sources', we will be most likely content with its scope and the manner of presentation. For a specialist, there will be little new to be gained from the book; but for a layman, it might be an excellent invitation to study the text with the aid of more comprehensive works. While the former can safely ignore it, the latter will appreciate it as a basic introduction. In any case, one thing will remain unchanged. Provided that the Spanish original, as stated by the editors, is a more significant undertaking, it might be reasonable to learn Spanish and to buy the original instead.

KRZYSZTOF P. SONEK OP

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY: A SURVEY OF RECENT STUDIES AND SOME NEW PROPOSALS by Gerd Lüdemann, *T&T Clark, Continuum, London, 2003, Pp. xii + 218, £19.99 pbk.*

This book is no easy read – and not just because the font size shrinks to almost nothing on a regular basis. It is clearly not meant as an accessible study with the general reader or undergraduate in view. It is exactly what its title claims it to be, a critical review in the first instance of how certain scholars in the last thirty years, many of them German, have reconstructed the history of Christianity in the first two centuries after the birth of Christ, looking above all at the account these scholars give of communities behind the New Testament texts. After the brief introduction chapters are devoted to 'conventional' studies, studies 'from the perspective of feminist theology', studies on social history, on Christianity in particular cities (Rome, Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Ephesus), and on particular topics within Early Church

History. Within each chapter Lüdemann proceeds book by book providing abstracts and often trenchant, astringent, comments. Theissen, Meeks, Schüssler Fiorenza, are each examined and faulted (the latter, for example, for the thesis that ‘the first testimony to the resurrection came from women’, which Lüdemann sees as dependent on relatively late strands in the New Testament texts that cannot be held as historically reliable (p. 92).

Two substantial appendices (pp. 147–62, 163–77) deal with pre-Christian Gnosticism and with Theissen’s *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion*; these are in fact the best parts of the book. In the second, amongst much else, Theissen’s view of the New Testament canon as ‘a confession of plurality’ is roundly rejected. Lüdemann aids teachers and scholars who wish to keep abreast of contemporary research, and take the measure of its variable worth, but that aid is strictly limited by the absence of any ‘maps’ of the local terrain; there is no guiding narrative of scholarly investigation and dispute; nor is there a subject index. Very few other than the odd reviewer would try to read this book from cover to cover, but in a world where people may be bewildered by the variety of books on contested subjects, and where theological pre-suppositions can unduly influence views of history, some will be grateful for the opportunity to consult this work to see what one highly learned scholar makes of studies by others in his field.

RICHARD FINN OP

EDITH STEIN by Sarah Borden, [Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series], Continuum, London and New York, 2003, Pp. x + 155, £45.00 hbk.

Edith Stein’s significance for our times emerges into ever higher relief since her canonization as *martyr* in 1999 caused the controversy with which the present book ends, and which I address first.

That Stein’s deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau together with some 300 Catholic Jews was the Gauleiter of Holland’s reaction to the Dutch bishops’ protest against the persecution of Jews is stated by Borden and others in answer to Jewish hurt at what could appear the appropriation by the Catholic Church of a death suffered in their Shoah, the Holocaust.

Where she seems less convincing is over Stein’s own sense of the import of her life and anticipated death: ‘for our people’, she put it to her sister, Rosa, as they prepared to leave the Carmel at Echt for the train-ride to execution; ‘for the unbelief of the Jewish people’, she expressed in her will, made three years previously. One view Borden advances that would interpret these words as an offering in satisfaction for Jewish ‘atheism’, might itself appear insulting to believing