

Loren L. Johns, ed. *Apocalypticism and Millennialism: Shaping a Believers Church Eschatology for the Twenty-First Century*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2000.

Although this book was completed in 1999, its publication did not quite get under the wire of the proleptically fateful breaking of the year 2000, but I suspect that none of the authors represented in it had concerns about that. The book's importance is not the date but its subject: this third volume in the series 'Studies in the Believers Church Tradition' is an exceptionally good collection of essays on an aspect of Christian belief, careful scholarly study of which, in this form, has long gone begging.

The essays are grouped under three categories: biblical, historical and theological, and contemporary issues and pastoral perspectives. Topics include Jewish apocalyptic literature by James C. Vanderkam, the eschatology of Jesus by William Klassen, the book of Revelation by John R. Yeats, and millennial and apocalyptic expectations in early and medieval church by Everett Ferguson and in Anabaptism by Lois Y. Barrett. Paul Boyer writes on prophetic belief in America past and present, William Trollinger on premillennial dispensationalism, and Tom Finger on a believers church eschatology. Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye, modern American prophecy adepts, get special attention. There are a total of twenty-seven essays plus a fine introduction.

A few of the offerings strike this reviewer as especially important. The first is the Introduction by the editor Loren Johns, in which he provides careful definitions of the terms apocalypticism, millennialism, and eschatology, plus a survey of past Believers Church Conferences and an indication of where records of them can be found. William Klassen offers an extremely compact treatment of the basic eschatological question, the rule or kingdom of God in the teaching and life of Jesus. Another significant contribution is Paul Boyer's essay "666 and All That," in which he captures the essence of his 1992 book *When Time Shall Be No More*. Mennonite intersection with premillennial dispensationalism is chronicled in papers about the Amishman called "Der Weiss Jonas Stutzmann," the prime Mennonite millennial exhibit Claas Epp, and others. One of the best essays is Tom Finger's "Outlines of a Contemporary Believers Church Eschatology," in which, among other things, he ventures into an area that has received little attention so far – eschatology and science.

A piece by Robert J. Clouse details the fortunes and work of America's number one apocalyptic forecaster, Hal Lindsey.

This attractive book is a first-rate exposition of what is being thought about the complex and vexing subject of the Endtimes by scholars in what is called the believers church tradition. Much of what is offered here is held in common with thinkers from other Christian traditions, e.g., historical surveys and much of the biblical work. Still, the essays on Jesus by Klassen and on believers church eschatology by Finger point to the conviction about the present rule of God and the hope for its future fulfillment as occupying a special place in believers church theology. The collection is scholarly in the best meaning of that term and establishes a high water mark of the maturity of the Believers Church Conference.

The lively book will be of special interest to pastors and church leaders in and beyond the confines of believers church congregations. It is recommended for spiritually and intellectually alert Christians everywhere. It is also an important resource for teachers and scholars.

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