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Mircea Eliade, *The Old Man and the Bureaucrats*, trans. by M. P. Stevenson. U. of Notre Dame Press, 1979. Hardcover. 128 pages. \$8.95. Reviewed by James B. Jordan.

Notre Dame has now issued in English two of Eliade's major works of fiction: this novella and his most important and longest novel, *The Forbidden Forest* (1978, 614 pp., \$18.95). Eliade's fiction is noteworthy for several reasons. As an expert in the field of "comparative religions," Eliade incorporates religious and philosophical ideas and symbols throughout his fiction, though not from a Christian standpoint. In a way, Eliade shows other younger writers "how to do it."

Also, Eliade's style is generally good and clear. This, coupled with the fact that his stories are very interesting, occasionally humorous, and memorable, make him a writer worthy of imitation. There is a growing market for Christian fantasy literature, of a quasi-allegorical sort, but much of what is being produced is very shallow in substance. Christian writers should take note of these two volumes.

The Forbidden Forest is too long to summarize here, but the shorter work, *The Old Man and the Bureaucrats*, can be. The old man is a schoolteacher (master of the Word) from before the communists took over Romania. He goes to visit an old student, now a state official, but the official has completely forgotten his youth. He and other bureaucrats become interested in the old man's tales of magical and wonderful events, which he claims took place in the lives of his students back before the war and the communist revolution. To him, these events are real, but to the bureaucrats they are *only* interesting tales from long ago, with perhaps some hidden (and sinister) double meanings.

Some of the bureaucrats begin to be caught up in the stories, but in the end they are "reassigned," and replaced by grey men with no sense of wonder, who have no interest in the old man and his stories. The basic theme, then, is cultural amnesia. For Eliade, the old man's magical tales represent a purer and fairer view of the world, from which men have fallen into modern statist technological totalitarianism. Healing

can only come when men stop blocking out the wonder of creation, and return to the older ways of viewing reality.

Moises Silva, *Biblical Words and their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*. Zondervan, 1983. Paperback, 210 pages. \$8.95. Reviewed by James B. Jordan.

This is a book to be studied, but even a first reading will greatly broaden the reader's understanding of language, and of Scripture. Prof. Silva introduces us to the science of linguistics, as it has developed especially in the last several decades, and shows how our understanding of Scripture is enhanced thereby. Building on the work of James Barr, he points out the common mistake of assuming that the meaning of a word is found in its etymology rather than in its usage. The word 'nice,' for instance, comes from the Latin *nescius* (ignorant) and used to mean (among other things), 'lascivious'; but it does not mean that anymore. The same is true for Biblical words.

All the same, preachers and theologians persist in treating Greek New Testament words as if their meaning can be determined from a study of their roots and etymology. The liberal German study of New Testament Greek words, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament Greek*, edited by Kittel, is largely marred by this error.

Silva's book only briefly discusses this problem, since it has become pretty well known in recent years. His study builds on insights such as this, and throughout he makes valuable applications to the work of exegesis and interpretation.

Highly recommended for anyone engaged in interpreting, teaching, or preaching Holy Scripture. The work is fully indexed.

Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries). Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1981. 240 pages. \$10.95, clothbound (paperbound also available).

A. Noordtzi, *Numbers* (Bible Student's Commentary). Trans. by Ed van der Maas. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983. 302 pages. \$16.95, clothbound. Reviewed by James B. Jordan.

Commentaries on the Book of Numbers are not exactly a dime a dozen, and those interested in recovering the meaning of Scripture for our times should seriously investigate these two volumes. Of the two, Wenham's is the better in that it is up to date, and in that Wenham takes the symbolic-theological meaning of the text more seriously than Noordtzi (as those who have profited from Wenham's excellent commentary on Leviticus can expect). For instance,

Wenham points out (following Barnouin) that the census figures in Numbers for the various tribes correspond to the synodic periods of the various planets and with other astral cycles, indicating a numerological fulfillment of God promise to Abraham that his seed would be as the stars of the sky, and following on the symbolic nature of the heavens as created in Genesis 1:14-16.

Again, the 42 campsites listed in chapter 33, if arranged in six cycles of seven campsites each, display the repetition of a pattern of events, which teach us about how God dealt with His people. Wenham points out (p.218f.), "the use of symbolic numbers does not necessarily mean they are artificial; similarly, symbolism in ritual does not imply the rites never take place. But the use of symbolism enhances the significance of the events and draws attention to them: There is more to such events or rituals than at first appears" A sovereign God orchestrates events so that they fall out perfectly in every respect.

Noordtzijs commentary is a translation of a Dutch work of the mid-20th century. An introduction from the publisher cautions us to be careful because Noordtzijs, though an orthodox Christian, tended to bring something of a "comparative religions" approach to the text. The problems are minor, however. Noordtzijs comments are fuller and more complete at many points than Wenham's, and make a good complement to the latter's work. Both men hold to an orthodox view of God and of Scripture, and to a Reformed understanding of salvation.

Both works are highly recommended.

John Platt, *Reformed Thought and Scholasticism: The Arguments for the Existence of God in Dutch Theology, 1575-1650*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982. Clothbound. 249 pages. 98 guilders (approx. \$36.00). Reviewed by James B. Jordan.

Church historians and historians of doctrine will want to take note of this work, which explores the supposed decline of high Reformation theology into protestant natural theology. Platt shows that the Barthian

school errs in rejecting all natural theology in Calvin, for in Calvin's theology natural revelation was quite clear, though its sole effect was damning to the self-deafened reprobate. Reformed "scholastics" never lost this emphasis. It was the Arminian Remonstrants who rejected man's natural knowledge of God, as sufficient to condemn.

Platt explores the ins and outs of this period. This is a book for specialists, but not "without real interest to the Christian thinking community at large.

Rousas J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard? An Analysis of the Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til*. Thoburn Press, [1958] 1983. Hardcover. Fully indexed. \$12.95.

One of the most important books of recent years has been this study and summary of the philosophy of C. Van Til by his incisive disciple R. J. Rushdoony. Of late, Rushdoony's writings on Biblical Law and his effective work in defense of Christian schools has received notice, but undergirding all of Rushdoony's thought and activity is the philosophy of presuppositionalism developed in its most consistent form (to date) by C. Van Til. While there are other introductions to Van Til's thought, most notably the eminently practical presentation by Richard Pratt, *Every Thought Captive* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), Rushdoony's remains by far the most penetrating.

The Christian Reconstruction movement cannot be understood without a careful reading of this book. We can be most grateful for Thoburn Press for making it available, for the first time in years in hardcover, and fully indexed.

To facilitate distribution of this important book, Geneva Divinity School Press is selling it. Price \$12.95, postpaid. Those who would also like to get the Pratt book, which complements Rushdoony's very well, may order both for \$16.95, postpaid. Make payments to GDS Press, and mail orders to 708 Hamvasy, Tyler, TX 75701. (The Pratt book alone is \$4.50, postpaid.)

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