

## REVIEWS

**Andreas Cellarius: *Harmonia Macrocosmica***, by R. van Gent (Taschen, Köln), 2006. Pp. 240, 53·5 × 32·5 cm. Price £69·99/\$125 (hardbound; ISBN 3 822 85290 2).

Those extremely lucky readers who own a copy of the original *Atlas Coelestis seu Harmonia Macrocosmica* (Johannes Janssonius, Amsterdam, 1660) need read no further. Their book, with its twenty-nine, massive, copper-plate, hand water-coloured celestial maps and diagrams is worth considerably more than a typical astronomer's annual salary. Even the later reprints from the original plates, run off by Valk & Schenk in 1708, sell for around £2000 each. So this new, bargain, full-sized, annotated reproduction of the University of Amsterdam's copy of the original star atlas is really welcome.

The originator of this reproduction, Dr. Robert H. van Gent, is a Utrecht astronomer and historian of astronomy who now specialises in the history of Dutch celestial cartography. He introduces the book by providing a first-class overview of the history of celestial maps and charts, and then regales us with detailed notes on each of the plates in the original atlas. These notes are in English, German, and French in the book under review. And if you can wait until 2007 March the notes will be in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese in a second edition. (In the original, the commentaries were in Latin.)

Andreas Cellarius (1596–1665) was born in Neuhausen, Germany, and then emigrated to Holland. In 1637 he was appointed as the rector (headmaster) of the Latin School in the Ceciliaklooster, Hoorn. Cellarius wrote three books. His first was on city fortifications and defence systems. Then he produced a book about Poland. His final work was a celestial supplement to a general world atlas being published by Johannes Janssonius. It is this atlas that showed Cellarius to be one of the greatest celestial cartographers of the Renaissance.

The plates in the reproduction under review are absolutely stunning. Benedikt Taschen, who managed the project and produced the book, is to be congratulated on the care that has been taken with the sharpness of the printing and vivid colour rendition. No expense seems to have been spared. Even the quality of the paper is worthy of praise. And the subject matter is of great interest. The original atlas was produced at an exciting epoch in the history of our subject. Three interpretations of the cosmos were still being debated. We are thus presented with plates illustrating the old geocentric views of Ptolemy, and others showing the new ideas of Copernicus and the 'compromise version' of Tycho Brahe. All the plates are in a rich Baroque style with classical and historical figures and astronomical vignettes gracing the banners and corners. The eight northern- and southern-hemisphere celestial star maps are stunningly beautiful. Cellarius even included those two 'Christian' depictions of the heavens in which Julius Schiller (*Coelum stellatum christianum*, 1627) filled the northern and southern sky with New and Old Testament figures, reserving the zodiac for eleven disciples and St. Mattheus.

This reproduction of *Harmonia Macrocosmica* not only presents us with full-sized copies of the original plates, but also provides many additional pages showing magnified versions of specific features. I cannot recommend this book too strongly. I was amazed at the quality and the reasonable price. It is an absolute treasure. — DAVID W. HUGHES.