

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Jeremiah*. By Elmer A. Martens. Believers Church Bible Commentary series. Scottsdale: Herald, 1986, 327 pp., \$17.95 paper.

This new series intends to provide guides on the Biblical text for any serious-minded student of the English Bible with authors being chosen from the Mennonite and Brethren Church tradition. Martens writes from that perspective, but aside from occasional examples the denominational perspective is not overly evident.

Martens' commentary provides outlines, explanatory notes and two integrative sections labeled "The Text in Biblical Context" and "The Text in the Life of the Church," which are attempts to see the larger picture after detailed discussions of the text itself. The commentary concludes with glossary notes, maps and bibliographic material.

The outlines are more than the usual chapter-and-verse listing as they often give insight into the arrangement of a passage by showing parallel thought patterns or other structural devices. The explanatory notes are the heart of the commentary, providing historical data, word studies, themes and literary features of Jeremiah. Relevant archeological and historical data are presented for further illumination. Most examples are presented with clear parallels to Jeremiah while some (e.g. *Instruction of Amenemope*, p. 121) are more obscure.

One strength is the numerous instances where literary genre or structural devices are examined. It is refreshing to see such devices as *inclusio*, judgment/salvation oracle, or lament continually addressed in the comments. Yet it is surprising that such little space is given to the basic elements of ancient Hebrew poetry or figures of speech.

Another strength is the frequent use of English versions. No one version is used throughout the commentary, but Martens presents different readings for comparison and, at times, engages in limited text criticism to point out the origin of variant readings. Most confusing is the chosen system of citing the Biblical text. At times quotation marks are used, at other times italics—and occasionally both. Martens compares the wording of various versions to point to a dynamic translation and attempts some modern equivalences himself. The "city gate," however, is just not the same as our shopping malls!

"The Text in Biblical Context" and "The Text in the Life of the Church" amplify selected areas of the commentary. The former (the stronger of the two) places a key topic or theme in the larger context of the (OT/NT) Scriptures, while the latter is often an application of the text either in view of the history of the Church or of contemporary issues with several examples taken from anabaptist or Mennonite traditions. Some topics are quite informative (e.g. marriage, p. 50; pride, p. 105), while others are too brief (e.g. Sabbath, p. 125; God's goodness, p. 207).

Glossary entries will be very helpful for the serious reader, providing both an introduction to the subject and a synthesis of main ideas. Cross references are made at appropriate places by italicized key words and page numbers, sometimes twice to the same entry on a page. Some duplication between the text and the glossary exists, and some entries are inadequate (e.g., doublets, p. 296; Baruch, p. 292), but most are quite helpful.

Martens presents several major themes of Jeremiah in the introduction (judgment/deliverance, knowing God, covenant, land), which are amplified as they occur in various passages. Other themes (e.g. restoration, the foe from the north) are developed at relevant points in the book, but there is no major place of synthesis for these. The matter of authorship is perhaps treated too briefly. Various views are given in the introduction and glossary notes. Martens writes from the perspective of Jeremianic authorship but speaks of the compilers of the book and notes sections that were probably written by Baruch (e.g. Jeremiah 26-29).

Martens holds that some NT "fulfilled" prophecy really "corresponds with" the OT, while predictive prophecy is "fulfilled." The new covenant and restoration to the land are Biblical promises that are not exhausted by a "single fulfillment" (p. 198). His view that Jeremiah's actions (imprecations) "cannot be totally approved in the light of the entire Scripture" (p. 138) and his reference to "Jeremiah's suicide wish" (20:14-18) need more clarification.

This work on Jeremiah will be most helpful to the beginning student who is looking for an expositional commentary that provides elucidation of background matters, difficult words and phrases and that points out structural devices in the text. Martens' work is not a theological commentary, but he does not avoid theological issues. Neither does this volume emphasize critical matters, although many are mentioned along the way. His exposition provides helpful background material for studying the book of Jeremiah. The comments in "The Text in Biblical Context," along with the glossary entries, make this commentary worth reading.

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*Wrath and Mercy: A Commentary on the Books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah.* By Maria Eszenyei Szeles. International Theological Commentary series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, x + 118 pp., \$7.95 paper.

On the back cover of its volumes the International Theological Commentary series claims to be "international in both scope and authorship." This volume, written by a professor of OT at the United Protestant Theological Seminary in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, certainly meets that claim.

In her commentary on Habakkuk, Szeles dates the prophet's ministry to the reign of Jehoiakim (609-597) and identifies him as a cultic prophet at the Jerusalem temple, a "seeing person and a praying person" whose prophecies "are composed in the form of the prayers such as we see in the 'psalms of complaint' used in public worship" (pp. 5-6). Szeles argues that Habakkuk's oracles, "just as is the case with the rest of the prophetic writings, came into being at various times. These prophecies of various genres have been systematically edited by a redactor in the postexilic period" (pp. 8-9).

Szeles' division of Hab 1:2-2:20 offers no surprises, following the basic divisions of the dialogue between Habakkuk and Yahweh. Her exposition of the text includes thorough discussion of the Hebrew terminology and combines good analysis with good readability. The only criticism is that the ITC series fails to distinguish between the Hebrew letters *hē* and *hēt* in its transliteration format. Habakkuk, according to the author, wrestles with two agonizing questions. First, can a tyrannical power be overcome by a still greater tyrant? Second, how could the God of right and justice choose such means to further his righteous cause? Habakkuk 2:4 is "the centerpiece, the heart, of the whole prophecy" (p. 30), for only through a confident

faith in God and his promises can the individual endure and even begin to comprehend what God is doing in such a situation.

Szeles suggests that chap. 3 was used as a prayer for public worship (3:3, 9, 13), the technical musical notations and v. 17 being later insertions designed to expand the hymn's scope (pp. 43, 55). Here again her exposition of the text is thorough and brings out the nuances of the original language, yet not in a mechanical sort of way.

The author's higher-critical presuppositions surface at times with an occasional reference to the Elohists (p. 32) or Deutero-Isaiah (p. 52), and the reader occasionally finds verses labeled as insertions or part of a redaction process with little if any evidence (p. 36 with regard to 2:6-20, p. 41 with regard to 2:17-29, as well as those already mentioned above).

Szeles' work on Zephaniah follows in the same general style. The author dates Zephaniah's ministry to c. 630 during the early reign of Josiah and understands the Hezekiah in the genealogy of 1:1 as King Hezekiah (pp. 61-62).

The central point of interest in Zephaniah's theology is his proclamation of the *yôm Yahweh*, the day of the Lord (p. 65). In this day the Lord displays himself through his mighty acts (p. 67), and judgment falls on God's people and on pagan nations (p. 70). The remnant, the "newly re-created people of the time of salvation," survives this time of judgment and "receives a new way of life as the outcome of Yahweh's new creative work and becomes the firstfruits of the future" (p. 71). This way of life features people who are humble and lowly, weak and needy, who recognize their consequent dependence on God, the source of their strength (p. 109).

As with the Habakkuk section, Szeles' exposition of Zephaniah interacts well with the text and gives evidence of good research (e.g. her helpful discussion on the archeology of Jerusalem, pp. 82-83).

Szeles' higher-critical views again surface in many places. On p. 64 she says, "To define exactly the *ipsissima verba* of the prophet is not possible. . . . Without doubt the book assumed its form in a productive developing sequence." Sections such as 2:8-12 and chap. 3 "originate in the period after the Exile, their format having been influenced by Deutero-Isaiah" (pp. 64-65). The heading of the book "may be attributed to the work of the Deuteronomist editor" (p. 73), and a redactor's hand is clear in many places in 3:9-20 (pp. 106, 110, 113).

Szeles is to be commended, however, for her willingness to deal with the texts of Habakkuk and Zephaniah theologically in their final form apart from her views on how they obtained that form. Readers who do not share Szeles' presuppositions may nevertheless benefit from her exegetical insights.

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*A Promise of Hope—A Call to Obedience: A Commentary on the Book of Joel and Malachi.* By Graham S. Ogden and Richard R. Deutsch. International Theological Commentary series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, x + 120 pp., \$7.95 paper.

According to the editor's preface, the goal of the International Theological Commentary series is "the Old Testament alive in the Church" (p. vii). The series "moves beyond the usual critical-historical approach to the Bible and offers a *theological* interpretation of the Hebrew text" (p. vii).

Ogden has contributed the commentary on Joel. Building upon H. W. Wolff's arguments (Hermeneia series), he defends the unity of the book of Joel on the basis of "literary features such as key words and phrases, inclusions, assonance, thematic

associations, and contrasts" (pp. 7-8; appendix 1) and dates the book to the early postexilic period (p. 14).

Ogden places the book within the lament tradition (p. 5). Four features characterize the lament elements of Joel (pp. 11-12). (1) Joel traditionally uses stylized or generalized language, which is not understood as literal. For example, such elements as the locust plague, drought and fire are not intended literally but "vividly portray that a crisis is at hand" (p. 11). (2) The laments call for deliverance from what the speaker perceives as undeserved calamity. (3) The laments are liturgical responses to threats the nation faces. In this case, the locusts represent a foreign power invading Judah. (4) The foreign nation oracles of chap. 3 comprise part of the prophet's lament liturgy and are not to be understood eschatologically but as indicating impending judgment against Judah's enemies.

Ogden's exegesis of Joel builds upon the foundation he has laid in his introduction. The locust imagery in chaps. 1-2 "represents vast numbers and complete destruction, wholly applicable to the invading armies as they forged their way toward Jerusalem" (p. 21). The term "day of the Lord" speaks of a time of immediate judgment in 1:15-18 and a day of salvation for God's people in 2:30-32 (p. 25). Ogden does not see 2:28-32 as embracing Gentiles at all, for "it is clear that Joel's original intention and what the early Church understood it to be are not identical. . . . What Joel saw as God's gift to a needy Judah, Peter claimed for all humanity" (p. 38).

Two appendices conclude Ogden's work. Appendix 1 lists the literary features that suggest Joel is a unity, while appendix 2 lists 21 alleged quotations of other Biblical writers.

Ogden's form-critical approach, focusing upon Joel's lament features, presents an interesting perspective on the book. I wish, however, that the author would better defend his points rather than assume them, especially since his interpretation strays from the mainstream at several places. He offers little defense for his interpretation of the locusts referring to armies (he never identifies the invader) or for his divorcing Joel's understanding of the Spirit's outpouring from Peter's. It seems that Ogden is always building on a foundation he has not really laid, and this weakens his presentation.

Deutsch's commentary on Malachi also begins somewhat unusually. The author suggests that we understand the term "Malachi" as "my messenger" and view the book as an anonymous work. (Interestingly, throughout his commentary he refers to the author as "Malachi," apparently for the sake of convenience.) Suggesting similarities with Ezra, Haggai, Obadiah, and "late material in Isaiah," he asserts that "the problems referred to in Malachi were problems common to the postexilic community in and around Jerusalem between 450 and 350 BC" (p. 67), but then he hedges a bit and suggests a broader range of 515-332 B.C. (p. 68).

In his exegesis of the book of Malachi, Deutsch considers the prophet's instruction to the priests (2:1-12) the "central theological concern" of the book, since this section takes a form different from the rest of the disputes (pp. 71-72). The priests naturally played a strategic role in the life of the community, and when they failed in their duties the people usually followed in failure. Malachi is based on what Deutsch calls "Torah theology" inasmuch as the Torah underlies most if not all of what the prophet says.

Deutsch concludes his commentary with a brief discussion of the role the books of the Apocrypha play in bridging the gap between the OT and the NT.

Methodological difficulties seem common in the work. For example, Deutsch refers to the lengthy redaction process of the book and the "many hands" through which the book has passed to achieve its present form (p. 72). He also often follows

the conjecture-based critical notes in *BHS* (see e.g. his argument on p. 104, where he argues for a later addition in Mal 3:6 based on a comparison with other passages that also have suggested emendations without any textual evidence). Also, on p. 114 Deutsch asserts that Mal 4:4-6 "may be regarded as the concluding postscript by the editor of the whole collection of the prophetic books" but fails to include any supporting evidence. The author also commonly refers to "Deutero-Isaiah" and "Trito-Isaiah" and always puts the term "Books of Moses" in quotation marks.

Theological questions arise as well. When discussing the distinction between priest and Levite (pp. 91-92), Deutsch asserts that this distinction did not really come before Josiah's time, whereas the account of Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16-17) deals with it at the time of Moses. Furthermore on pp. 97-98 Deutsch suggests that the warning against divorce (Mal 2:14-16) also applies to Israel's relationship with God, though such an understanding of the text would make God the bride. The author also proposes on pp. 114-115 that although the NT makes Elijah the forerunner, the book of Malachi makes him the Messiah.

Other statements Deutsch makes will also puzzle the evangelical. On p. 87, discussing the stormy relationships that sometimes exist between Christians and non-Christians, he says that "this relationship is characterized by an un-Christian arrogance which claims 'absolute truths' for itself and forgets that nothing is absolute except God." Are not the truths we proclaim also absolute in their meaning and authority, since they originate with God himself? Furthermore on p. 88 Deutsch speaks of other faiths held by "people who try, according to their individual understanding of what is 'true' and 'good,' to make this world a better place to live in." He speaks of the "sincerity of their attitudes" in such a way that it seems to imply that other faiths are part of God's kingdom.

Many readers may enjoy interacting with the different perspectives the authors present, but readers looking for careful argumentation and ably-defended conclusions will be somewhat disappointed.

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*Word Meanings in the New Testament.* One-volume edition. By Ralph Earle. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986, 487 pp., \$24.95.

This work is a compilation of six shorter books published by Beacon Hill Press between 1974 and 1984. Earle is well known for his work in NT exegesis and translation. He served on the fifteen-man Committee on Bible Translation, the governing body overseeing the translation of the NIV.

Earle's work, which follows in the tradition of Vincent's *Word Studies in the New Testament* and Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, is intended to assist in "sharpening the preacher's tools for exposition of the Word of God" (p. vii).

Clearly, Earle updates the work of Robertson and Vincent with references to the NASB, NIV, JB and other modern versions. He quotes often from major classical commentators as well as *TDNT*, *MM* and *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*.

Earle's book takes the NT in canonical order, choosing words, phrases and concepts the author considers important. The words referenced are from the KJV, which may slow down those who regularly use another version. Greek words are transliterated throughout, and a pronunciation guide is given at the beginning of

the book. At the end of the book is an index of English words for ready reference to helpful parallel discussions.

Earle's concise discussions typically include etymological, grammatical and theological matters. Readers without an extensive background in Greek will find the discussions understandable and helpful, although some of the comments require a working knowledge of textual criticism. Earle includes a valuable discussion on the origins of variants within the Biblical text (pp. 158-159) and makes mention of most of the major textual problems in the NT. He concludes that John 7:35-8:11 was not a part of the original text and that 1 John 5:7 was added by Erasmus because of ecclesiastical pressure. Strangely, however, he makes no mention at all of the dispute concerning Mark 16:9-20.

Sometimes Earle goes beyond the actual meanings of the words to include theological and homiletical comments. For example, explaining the phrase "touch me not" (John 20:17), he notes: "Jesus was telling Mary not to hold on to Him in the flesh—as she clung to Him—but to let Him go so that He could come in the person of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Then He could be with all believers everywhere all the time" (p. 95).

In evaluating a work of this type it is easy to quibble over the inclusion or omission of particular words and concepts. Further, the theological and exegetical implications of the words are even more likely to result in disagreement. Readers are likely, however, to find two features in particular somewhat distracting.

The first is the lack of balance in the treatment of the NT books. No doubt Earle spent a great deal of his life studying and teaching the Pauline corpus. This is reflected in the lopsided character of the book. Romans and Ephesians command an abundance of material—over one-quarter of the book. While the lexical and exegetical importance of Romans justifies lengthy treatment, Earle's 85-page section dwarfs that of other books. The entire general-epistles section is significantly less than the discussion on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Thus a student looking for insights in Paul's doctrinal books will find a wealth of material, but in other areas of the NT he will probably be disappointed in the scanty (by comparison) treatment.

A second hesitation is Earle's approach to certain passages as a means of arguing for Arminian theology. Clearly an author has a right to record his own theology, but in a work entitled *Word Meanings in the New Testament* one would expect a less polemic treatment. For example, commenting on Heb 6:6 Earle states: "The Greek clearly indicates that one may become a partaker of the Holy Spirit—obviously a Christian—and yet fall away and be lost" (p. 423). Even those inclined to this interpretation will feel uncomfortable with the words "clearly" and "obviously," which seem to ignore the inherent difficulties in the passage as well as the divergent opinions among evangelical scholars.

On the opposite side of the argument, Earle refutes passages usually adopted by Calvinists. Commenting on the phrase "in Christ" in Rom 8:39, Earle concludes: "There is only one thing that can separate us from [the love of God]—our own wills!" (p. 186). Such a conclusion does not arise from the terms within the passage but from the author's desire to argue for a certain theological position (note also the discussion of Rom 9:18, 23). While Earle should not deny his theological position, it would seem better to point out how different theological positions interpret the passages.

With these two reservations in mind, one may still find in Earle's work a healthy and insightful analysis of NT vocabulary.

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*The Historical Reliability of the Gospels.* By Craig Blomberg. Downers Grove/Leicester: InterVarsity, 1987, xx + 268 pp., \$11.95.

This useful volume surveys an impressively large segment of contemporary critical discussion of the gospels and related literature. Blomberg's basic argument is that there is good reason to affirm the reasonableness and substantial, if not total, historical accuracy of the canonical gospels. While Blomberg is an evangelical and affirms the divine inspiration of the NT, it is his intention to show that the findings of painstaking historical analysis corroborate the high view of Scripture that the Church as a whole championed until the last two centuries. While some, particularly in conservative circles, may feel the gospels are true because they believe in them, Blomberg shows that it is at least as appropriate to believe in them because they can be and have been shown to be true.

As the title reflects and as Blomberg states (p. xviii), the book in some ways supersedes F. F. Bruce's classic little book *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* But it restricts itself largely to the gospels and gospel research per se.

In chap. 1 Blomberg surveys the major problem areas relating to the gospels' historical veracity. These include the unity-diversity issue and the synoptic problem. Chapter 2 probes the nature, strengths and excesses of form and redaction criticism. It also examines the suggestion that midrash is a useful explanatory category for interpreting at least parts of the gospels, and it touches on recent hermeneutical trends like structuralism, post-structuralism and social-scientific methods.

Chapter 3 takes up the problem of miracles. "Much recent scholarship . . . has served to strengthen the view that the [gospel] miracles are historical and that the Christian claim is true" (p. 112). Chapter 4 investigates the primary historical problems posed by the synoptics: conflicting theology, paraphrasing, chronological discrepancies, omissions, summarization of speeches or blocks of teaching, doublets, variations in names and numbers. Blomberg thinks he establishes "a strong case for the historical accuracy" of the synoptics (p. 152). Chapter 5 discusses the peculiar problems that attend interpretation of John's gospel, while chap. 6 examines what extra-gospel writings, both canonical (e.g. the NT epistles) and noncanonical (e.g. the so-called *Gospel of Thomas*), contribute to our understanding of the gospel tradition and how that tradition was passed on.

A final chapter considers the genre of the gospels and two methodological issues: (1) the burden of proof (it rests on those who would assert that a given gospel passage is not historical or accurate, Blomberg concludes), and (2) the criterion of authenticity (it has been abused, but rightly utilized it can "eventually lead one to accept virtually all the gospel tradition" [p. 253]).

The strength of this study is that it is not really the work of Blomberg alone. It is rather a summation and practical application of several dozen careful essays comprising the six-volume *Gospel Perspectives* series (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980-86). These studies were produced by evangelicals, most belonging to either Tyndale Fellowship in Britain or the Institute for Biblical Research in North America. Blomberg contributed to the series and co-edited the sixth volume. Based on his involvement in the project and with the help of input from scholars such as M. Harris, I. H. Marshall, J. Wenham, R. Edwards and D. Guthrie, Blomberg is well situated to comment on the wide range of topics he treats.

Yet he is not merely assembling a body of evangelical opinion. He carries on his discussion in dialogue with the broader world of critical exegesis in the midst of which evangelicals are a distinct and at times beleaguered minority. While he seeks to take seriously the challenge of nonevangelical hermeneutics to evangelical under-

standing of the gospels, he gently but firmly demonstrates that evangelicals are not alone in sometimes reading the Bible uncritically. Nonevangelicals do so too, often ignoring plausible reconstructions of Biblical data due to unfounded, historiographically untenable methods and biases.

As a clear, current and lively compendium of mainstream (and some obscure) assessments of the gospels' historicity (or lack of historicity), this book stands alone. Many scholars will find it valuable in updating their awareness of contemporary research. Many college and seminary teachers will find use for parts if not all of it in courses covering one or more of the gospels, or the life of Jesus, or NT criticism. It might even have value for students at the survey level, if their reading were properly steered by a wise instructor.

Moreover it is sensitive enough to the relevance of the historical question to the gospels' theological usefulness that it functions well, without really trying, as an apologetic resource, distilling arguments for and against the gospels' (and ultimately the gospel's) truth value. While modern theologians (and unfortunately some in the evangelical camp) disparage an evidential approach to the gospel data, and while evidentialism as a system obviously has its limits, Blomberg has done not only scholarship but the Church a service. His study strengthens the cognitive foundations for a Christian faith that is at once both reverent with respect to what is hidden from it and confident with respect to what has been surely revealed.

Such a versatile, informed and positive study deserves a wide readership.

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*Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition.* Designed and edited by John Dominic Crossan. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 253 pp., n.p.

Can anything good come from The Jesus Seminar? Ordinary evangelical laypersons are incredulous at the decisions this group of scholars keeps reaching. That Jesus never predicted his own *parousia* and that the only word of the Lord's prayer he might have said was "Father/Abba" are two examples I have heard both derided from the pulpit and scoffed at from the pew.

Crossan's workbook is an exception, although it is more "derived from conversations in 'The Jesus Seminar'" than an official publication of the seminar. This text about texts is part of the ongoing Foundations and Facets: New Testament series edited by R. W. Funk, who is also the convener and director of the Seminar.

Crossan has isolated all the sayings attributed to Jesus in any early tradition, canonical and extracanonical. He has organized them into four genres: parables, aphorisms, dialogues, stories. The commands and comments of Jesus during miracles or exorcisms have been deliberately excluded so that they may be given fuller separate consideration elsewhere.

In the interests of objectivity and neutrality, Crossan chose as his data base all the early texts that have been inventoried. Nothing was excluded that purported to be a dominical utterance. The extracanonical texts cited are of four kinds: fragmentary manuscripts, Nag Hammadi codices, apostolic fathers, patristic citations.

The format is similar to Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*: Each saying is titled and numbered with a cross-reference system. When a particular saying might belong to two different genres it is printed under both headings (for example, the saying "Temple's Actual Destruction" is listed twice [sections 192 and 456], both as



aphorism [§A159] and as story [§S51]). The sayings are reproduced in English only, with the RSV cited for canonical texts.

One basic postulate governed the production of this book: "The exact same unit often appears in different sources, genres, and versions within the Jesus tradition" (p. xiii). Evangelicals certainly concur, for it is a factual statement. The interpretation of these differences is of course a matter of sharp disagreement. But we are indebted to Crossan for making this resource available for study. It will help us understand the authoritative sayings of Jesus better. And for me it has been fascinating to see (again) that the extracanonical writers placed such extreme significance on the words of Jesus, even when they freely adapted (and perhaps invented) his words to apply to the needs of their own generation.

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*The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections.* By John S. Kloppenborg. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987, xviii + 377 pp., \$39.95.

For many years scholars of the gospels have treated the Q source like the Loch Ness monster. Many totally denied its existence. Others simply ignored the sightings and avoided discussion of the topic altogether. Still others, however, insisted that the Q monster exists.

In recent years there have been a number of reported sightings, particularly from German scholars (Lührmann, Hoffmann, Polag, Schulz, Zeller). As these reports would have it, somewhere lurking in the woods of the Rhineland lives a bona fide Q creature. Its silhouette has been described frequently, and a committee of American scholars is currently attempting to reconstruct a composite drawing of the beast (for the work of the Q seminar of the Society of Biblical Literature cf. SBLSPS 22 [1983] to present). To the English-speaking world these sightings have received little attention or have been eschewed as phantasmagoria. Kloppenborg's work, however, should be hailed as the incarnation of the Q monster. Here, it appears, Kloppenborg has netted the ichthyosaur. At long last the English-speaking world can view *Quelle* in fine detail. The conclusion to be drawn is that Q indeed exists and always has.

The work began as a dissertation (University of St. Michael's College, 1984) and has been published with slight revisions and a reduction in the footnotes. Following on the heels of J. M. Robinson's suggestion that Q should be located in the realm of sapiential literature (*Trajectories through Early Christianity*, 1971), Kloppenborg has undertaken the task of clearly delineating the genre of Q. He acutely highlights the deficiencies of other classifications (*kērygma*, *logoi sophōn*, prophetic utterance) and contends that Q is a dynamic, changing form of sapiential literature with parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature.

Assuming that Q was compiled over a period of time, Kloppenborg attempts a detailed analysis of the composition and development of the Q document. He tries to identify three stages in the development of Q (p. 317). The first stage consisted of a group of six "wisdom speeches" that he finds closely parallels Near Eastern instructional genres (pp. 264-289). It was later supplemented with sapiential material that was highly critical of Israel. This layer of material, Kloppenborg argues, is analogous to cynic chriae collections (pp. 306-316). Finally, Q added the temptation story, which, though it is a narrative, does not alter Q's fundamental genre as sapiential literature (pp. 325-327).

My primary concern with the book regards Kloppenborg's highly stratified approach to Q. In addition to the above-mentioned three stages of Q, he occasionally maintains further strata in the composition (see the discussion of the composition of Q 7 [pp. 115-117] and the composition of Q 13-14 [pp. 234-237]). Even if it can be demonstrated that Q was redacted in this fractional fashion, it must be questioned whether a literary analysis of the text can discover such distinctions with any degree of certitude. It may be preferable to maintain just two levels of Q and attempt to highlight the differences between the earlier and later stages.

On the other hand, the book has much to commend it. The first three chapters are a concise summary of current research on Q and should be considered mandatory reading for novices. The next three chapters (pp. 102-262) are composition-critical analyses of the major sections of Q. While one may quibble over the fine points of Kloppenborg's analyses, this section has been thoroughly researched and is persuasively argued. Finally, Kloppenborg's conclusions regarding the genre of Q are hard to refute. He has supplied the data of many parallel sayings collections from the ancient Near East and has provided two appendices to help illustrate his thesis. This work will likely carry the tide of scholarly opinion for years to come.

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*Matthew.* By H. N. Ridderbos. Bible Student's Commentary series. Translated by Ray Tognman from the 1950-51 Dutch original. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987, 556 pp., n.p. *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew.* By Barclay M. Newman and Philip C. Steine. London/New York/Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1988, 939 pp., \$13.00.

In its own time the commentary by Ridderbos was considered a minor classic at the upper end of the semipopular scale. It focuses on the straightforward exegesis and exposition of the text, with relatively little interaction with secondary literature (though there is certainly an awareness of the issues up to 1950). It is still worth reading almost forty years later. On the other hand, not only in terms of issues but also in terms of contemporaneity and rigor this work is now seriously dated. Better volumes are available in German, French and English, no less faithful to Scripture and more current (and more complete as well). In short, this is a good buy for those who are collecting a lot of commentaries on Matthew, since here and there one finds insights not readily available elsewhere. For the person who is buying only one or two commentaries on this gospel, however, Ridderbos should not be considered.

The volume by Newman and Steine is one of the latest to be added to the Helps for Translators series and is a remarkable value for the price. In each section the RSV and TEV are set out, and a number of exegetical notes follow, with numerous references to other translations and many insightful reflections on how difficult expressions could be rendered in various language/cultural settings. The sheer bounty of such material makes the work somewhat tedious for the pastor or theological student except in small doses, where such exposure breeds a healthy respect for the translator's task.

Although this particular volume of the series goes to special lengths to link the various kinds of discourse in Matthew's gospel together, what is disappointing is that the work too frequently betrays serious ignorance of current exegetical and theological literature relative to the task of translating Matthew and consequently

advocates translations and renderings that are extremely implausible while not even considering some important options. Matthew 5:17-20 is of course extremely difficult, but in any case their treatment of this pericope will not do. Compare Jeremias (*New Testament Theology*) on the meaning of 23:3. The treatment of the parable in 25:31-46 (see especially on 25:40) is linguistically and theologically irresponsible.

In the bibliography, no commentary published after 1977 appears and only three after 1971. Only one out of fifteen listed commentaries could remotely be labeled "evangelical." Why R. Pregeant's 1978 thesis *Christology Beyond Dogma* should be included, but not the study by Robert Banks, is beyond comprehension. I draw attention to these problems not because they constitute an exhaustive list or are the most serious difficulties in the work but because they represent weaknesses that are endemic to it.

In short, this is a work that the theological student may usefully dip into, that the translator must have but should not rely on without consulting three or four major commentaries, and that the expert need only consult from time to time.

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*The Christbook: A Historical/Theological Commentary on Matthew 1-12.* By Frederick Dale Bruner. Waco: Word, 1987, xxx + 475 pp., \$24.95.

In his *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Eerdmans, 1970) F. D. Bruner established himself as a theological exegete to be reckoned with, manifesting in the second part of that work a felicitous ability to follow the train of thought in the Biblical text and apply it with insight to contemporary problems. Much of the helpfulness of the volume arose from his conception of what he then called "the 'middle kingdom' of systematic theology between the empires of exegesis, on the one hand, and of missionary theology on the other" (p. 7). Twenty years later that theological geography remains a constant as Bruner gives us a theological commentary on a Biblical text arising from a practical missionary situation.

The problem was how to teach systematic theology to third-world (Philippine, Malaysian, etc.) students who did not relate well to abstract western texts. The answer? The one that finally worked was to start with the very concrete language of the parables of Jesus. The attempt to teach thus more systematically led to the realization that "with a little imagination . . . it is possible to see catechetical Matthew emphasizing particular doctrines in his Gospel chapter by chapter" (p. xiv). Thus the project was born: Use the gospel of Matthew as a basic textbook for systematic theology; start with faithful exegesis of the Biblical text; relate it to the historical creeds and formulations of the Church; and finally bring it down to the major issues and problems facing the Church in the present. We have the first installment of the results in the book under review. The remainder is (hopefully soon) to follow.

This is not an ordinary commentary. Usually helpful, sometimes brilliant, often nourishing, occasionally frustrating, sometimes perverse, it is never dull. At his best, Bruner combines something of Luther's passionate insight into the heart of the gospel with something of Calvin's meticulous and common-sense approach to exegesis. It is refreshing to see how often basic Reformation insights combine with scientific exegesis to form the key that really opens up the text. At his worst Bruner

has a tendency to make almost an idol of ecumenicity (so that fundamentalism and liberation theology, for example, become equal and opposite errors) and to take an explicitly Barthian approach to the doctrine of inspiration. The sitting loose to historicity that R. Gundry struggled to justify exegetically and to reconcile with the doctrine of inerrancy Bruner accepts without a struggle, explicitly denying any commitment to inerrancy. It does not really matter if Jesus actually said such and such; it is enough that the Church was inspired to represent him as such. It does not matter whether an event (e.g. the visit of the Magi or the flight into Egypt) actually happened; it is enough that it "preach the gospel" and thus somehow represent something true about Jesus. The problem: Where does this kind of thing stop? It logically leads to a place Bruner would be horrified to go: Barth's inability to give a straight answer to C. F. H. Henry's famous question about whether the resurrection body of Christ was objectively real enough to have showed up on the film in a reporter's camera.

Bruner's ground for rejecting inerrancy deserves some attention because his winsome evangelical insights and obvious love of Jesus could make his approach to inspiration attractive to the unwary. Inerrancy, he says, is to inspiration what docetism is to Christology: It fails to confess the true humanity along with the deity. We do not claim that Jesus made all his shots or batted a thousand in whatever the equivalent games were that he played as a Palestinian youth, so why should we claim that Scripture never makes a mistake? It is an extremely plausible argument until one notices how it misses the point. Jesus did not shoot baskets or swing the bat "with authority, not as the scribes." He did not make indiscriminate use of his supernatural prerogatives. So the question is not what the sinless but truly human humanity of Jesus says about the text of Scripture but what the doctrine of inspiration says about it. And that is a question Bruner does not really address.

Here then is a work that is brilliant but flawed, to be used with caution but definitely to be used. It is hard to think of another commentary that is more fruitful in terms of stimulating the kind of thinking about the meaning of the text that is the prerequisite for good preaching and teaching. It bears such fruit abundantly, but (to mix metaphors for a moment) it is up to us to separate it from the chaff.

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