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BOOK REVIEWS

An Introduction to the Bible. By Robert Kugler and Patrick Hartin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 538 pp., $50.00.

Robert Kugler is the Paul S. Wright Professor and Chair of Christian Studies and teaches at the Lewis and Clark College of Arts and Sciences. He holds a Ph.D. from Notre Dame. Patrick Hartin is a Professor of Religious Studies, teaching New Testament Studies in the Religious Studies Department at Gonzaga University and holds two doctorates in Theology from the University of South Africa, one in Ethics and one in NT. Their book, *An Introduction to the Bible*, follows the survey model with the "Critical Issues" integrated into the "walks through the biblical books and the discussions of theological themes" (p. 2). It has a fair number of black and white illustrations and maps positioned in pertinent areas, and the end of each chapter includes "Questions for Review and Discussion" and "Further Reading" suggestions. The front matter of the book includes a very helpful "Glossary of Terms."

The authors clearly give their position in the beginning of the book when they note their approach, stating, "In this Introduction we set aside, for the most part, concern for the history *in* the text to focus on the prior issue, the history *of* the text." (p. 38). There is an odd and potentially confusing presentation of the books of the Bible found on the contents page and the ordering of the books. While maintaining a traditional English Bible presentation of the books of the OT, they give the NT books in an order not found in English (or Greek!) Bibles. They present the NT in more of a somewhat genre classification giving them as: The Synoptic Gospels; The Letters of Paul; The Johannine Tradition; and General Letters and Revelation. It seems a bit inconsistent to treat the testaments differently that way, especially for an introduction course. If I were to modify the order of the books in an introduction, I would begin by giving one of the several Jewish orderings for the Hebrew Bible before giving any consideration to a modification of the presentation of the NT writings. I would suggest that the students for which this book seems to be aimed (community colleges, basic Bible courses) would appreciate a layout that matches both of the testaments they find in the Bible they are using for the course.

Generally there are two philosophical approaches to evaluating and presenting the Bible. One is to see it as the Word of God, God's message to man concerning himself and their relationship. The other is so present it as "the word about the God concept," the musings of man about a supreme being, a literary artifact of a people with no or a very little core consciousness considering the idea of a creature higher than themselves. This work is of the latter category. It resembles a hypothetical History Channel presentation of "Mysteries of the Bible" that could very easily be labeled "Musings on a Supreme Being by the 'Jews' and the 'Christians.' " Those musings, along with myths, legends, and ancient oral traditions, are the informants of the writers of these books.

Not surprisingly, the authors present this work as being built on the critical evaluation of the biblical text based on narrative, structural, and reader response criticism (p. 40). They place themselves in the critical tradition of "Bultmann especially, along with other major figures in twentieth-century biblical scholarship such as Gerhard von Rad and more recently Brevard Childs, [who] consciously blended the critical enterprise

with concern for the fundamental theological thrust of the Bible. They learned from critical scholarship so as to deepen and broaden the Bible's voice as it speaks of God" (p. 41).

The preference of the authors for the phrase "word about God" instead of "word of God" throughout the book in essence makes their approach one that views the Bible as a pseudepigraphal work. They continually present the Bible as the record of men giving their "word about God." If it is no more than that, then when the Bible speaks of men speaking as God directed them or of men receiving the word of God directly in the "thus saith the Lord" passages, then in such cases those records are pseudepigraphic, attributing to God those words that are in actuality the words and thoughts of men, thereby attempting to lend credence to their words with weight far above what they possess in themselves. And in this is revealed the position of a school of thought that wants to hang onto the "traditions" that they have received and give them credence as cultural artifacts but find in them no real authority because they are built on ostensibly deceitful writing. The authors attempt to lighten this perspective by arguing in several places that ancient authors operated under different standards back in the old days and that we should not hold them to the high standard of truth of presentation that we today expect from a writer. As such it is easy for them to note errors and contradictions and mistakes without relinquishing their hold on this cultural artifact that is valuable only because of its antiquity and by the fact that it is a received tradition and so worthy of reverence. Authority does not attach itself to such a document.

It is frustrating to read scholars who find errors in the text thinking the authors themselves either did not see them or ignored them. Baruch Halpern very emphatically pointed out a severe caution of the modern interpreter of ancient texts when he warned, "It is not legitimate to assume, as has often been done, that the editors were unable to see the contradictions, as we moderns do, that the editors were, in effect, less sentient than we. This is not just arrogant; on the historical record, it is absurd" (*The First Historians* xxiv–xxv).

Unfortunately, for a book that seems to be for community college or basic courses on the Bible—courses that would potentially include a wide variety of students, those who read the Bible more traditionally and those who come to it without prior exposure—the perspective and presentation of the authors is anything but balanced, something one would hope to find in a basic work. A few telling discussions of authorship illustrate this lack of consideration of the ongoing discussion. The authors go to great lengths in assigning a female author to the book of Ruth by noting, "Altogether these observations make it difficult to imagine an ancient Israelite male composing the book of Ruth" (p. 140) and yet dismiss the possibility that James wrote the book that tradition has assigned for him by asserting, "A literary analysis of the letter shows that the Greek is of such superior quality that it is impossible to imagine someone from Galilee being able to produce this writing, even if a secretary were helping him" (p. 503). So on the one hand, the authors argue for female authorship for Ruth based on the impossibility of a man to write such a work; on the other hand, they assert non-Jacobite authorship for the book of James because a Galilean could not write like that.

The authors appear to work very hard to eschew any traditional view while fostering the most controversial position. And then, for perhaps the most debated case of authorship—that of the book of Hebrews—it is assigned Pauline authorship based on tradition with no presentation of the modern discussion (p. 475). No consideration is given to the author of John actually being the brother of James, one of the three closest disciples of Jesus. Rather, Kugler and Hartin argue, "The Evangelist, a disciple of the Beloved Disciple, was the real literary genius who crafted this Gospel [not on eye witness accounts, but] on the basis of traditions and reflections that had developed over the course of many decades" (p. 491). As for the "Beloved Disciple" mentioned so often in

the Gospel, he "most plausibly was a minor disciple during Jesus' ministry who was neither one of the Twelve nor an Apostle. Because he exercised such a small role in Jesus' ministry he is unimportant for the Synoptic tradition" (p. 491).

Some books are clear presentations of the divide that exists in biblical scholarship. This is one of them. It would find use in a classroom as a counterpoint to a more balanced approach.

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The Bible: An Introduction. By Jerry L. Sumney. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010, 432 pp., $42.00.

Jerry L. Sumney is a Professor in Biblical Studies at Lexington Theological Seminary, and is a noted scholar, not least for his several volumes published in the area of Pauline Studies. In contrast to his other published work, *The Bible: An Introduction* is a book of general interest in the Bible that assumes its audience has little or no prior biblical knowledge. The work is intended for an academic study, and it is offered as a textbook presumably for an introductory college level course.

The first impression one receives when examining the text is quite positive. The book employs glossy pages with full color photographs, maps, and charts. Numerous text-boxes or sidebars occur in each chapter to highlight further information in the form of definitions, historical or cultural insights, or theological observations. Over 100 text-boxes of citations from the biblical text appear at relevant points to support the discussion of the main text. The eighteen maps are strategically located throughout. The layout of features on the page is visually captivating and invites one to delve deeper into its contents. The visual appeal of the text will no doubt resonate well with today's college students who have become used to receiving information via the eye-gate in the form of video or the Internet, or other forms of visual media rather than merely the plain text of earlier generations.

The content of the book is presented in three parts. Part 1, "What the Bible is All About," discusses the composition and canon, the transmission of the biblical text to the present, and an overview of the sense of the Bible as an inspired text. The other two sections, Part 2, "What is the Story of the Hebrew Bible?" and Part 3, "What is the Story of the New Testament?" introduce the two testaments in canonical order. Sumney is to be commended for including a chapter on the span of time between OT and NT, an area of study often ignored by evangelicals but essential for understanding the changed social, political, and religious conditions found at the opening of the NT.

Each chapter features a textbox entitled "At a Glance" that previews topics for the reader. Chapters are well organized under headings and subheadings. Each chapter concludes with a chapter review. The review identifies key topics covered, lists key terms encountered, and provides study and discussion questions regarding the chapter's content. Further review materials are available online (www.fortresspress.com/sumney). A short bibliography presents additional print resources and texts are listed for each chapter under the heading "For Further Reading."

Sumney often makes statements concerning critical issues that conservative scholars will question. Sumney is first of all dismissive of plenary verbal inspiration of the biblical text as a late innovation that becomes lost in theological casuistry and that would reduce the biblical writers to "little more than simply conduits through which the word of God flowed to get onto the pages of the Bible" (41). In the OT, the Documentary

Hypothesis is presented much as Wellhausen originally proposed it, even though the theory has been challenged by many across a wide spectrum of scholarship. Sumney presents much of the narrative contents of Genesis 1–11 on the same level of parabolic stories such as the Good Samaritan, which need not be historical or factual to be true, as long as "they express something true about the meaning of life" (p. 55). Sumney views the two traditions of David as court musician and an unknown shepherd difficult to reconcile "as history" (p. 120). Three prophets wrote under the name of Isaiah, the second and third in and after the Exile, respectively (p. 144). The composition of Daniel is dated in part to the time of the Seleucids and Maccabeans (pp. 165–66). These few examples are, admittedly, well-charted waters that divide, but take a direction many of us are not willing to go.

The NT treatment fares better and Sumney does well in presenting the importance and centrality of the resurrection in the Gospels and Pauline letters. Especially the preformed material used by Paul indicates that in the earliest period the early believers espoused faith in a resurrected and exalted Christ (pp. 312–13, 321–22). There are, however, generalized conclusions presented as the view of "most scholars" that I would challenge, such as Paul's imprisonment in Rome leading directly to his execution (p. 293) or 2 Corinthians as a compilation of multiple letters (p. 313). Sumney sees many of the NT Epistles as pseudonymous (including Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 & 2 Peter, and 1, 2, and 3 John). He suggests pseudonymity "was widely practiced and did not carry the stigma plagiarism does today" (p. 336). Space does not permit a detailed rebuttal on this simplistic conclusion to a complex issue, although early Christians rejected known pseudonymous literature from the canon. Even the presumed pseudonymous 2 Thessalonians cautions against accepting "a letter seeming to be from us" (2 Thess 2:2).

Sumney is a good writer and has produced a volume that is quite readable without being too technical. Moreover, the level and content are in general quite appropriate to introduce the study of the Bible to undergraduate students, which I believe is his intent. Readers and colleagues within his own constituency will no doubt welcome his contribution without hesitation. Sumney does, however, present many conclusions of literary criticism of the Bible as settled, when in fact debate among scholars continues. In fairness, the nature of the book and its projected readership makes a sustained discussion of these conclusions inappropriate; however, the reader should know that the author presents an introduction to the Bible from a decided perspective that the more conservative of us will not share. Because of this, many of us will hesitate to adopt *The Bible: An Introduction* as a text.

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A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament. By Mark J. Boda. Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 1.Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009, x + 622 pp. $59.50.

Mark Boda is Professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College and Professor in the Faculty of Theology of McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. This volume is the first of a new series that, as the name indicates, will focus on interpretation of the Hebrew texts with emphasis on their theological significance. The different volumes, either monographs or collected essays, may reflect use of traditional critical methods or newer literary approaches.

Boda describes his approach as "biblical theological . . . [and] canonical thematic, tracing the presentation of the theology of sin and its remedy in the canonical form and shape of the Old Testament" (p. 4). The target for the work is "as much as possible to investigate the theme of sin and its remedy within the biblical books as individual literary units and as literary units that contribute to the various canonical divisions and the message of the entire Hebrew Bible" (p. 12).

The book contains a Preface, Introduction, three Parts (Torah, Prophets, Writings), a Conclusion (appearing as the last chapter of Part 3), Works Cited, and two Indexes, one of Authors and one of Scripture. Each part contains typically one chapter per biblical book (including Samuel, Kings, and Ezra-Nehemiah as single entities). Exceptions include Leviticus (two parts), Joshua and Judges (combined in one chapter), The Book of the Twelve (divided into two parts, Hosea-Micah and Nahum-Malachi), and Psalms (two parts). Boda provides summaries for most of the component parts, from the smallest (parts of chapters) to the largest (the three major Parts).

Practically speaking, the work follows the order of the Hebrew Bible. Boda carefully lays out his intended approach: "Each canonical section will begin with an orientation to and end with a reflection on its internal shape and thematic contribution to the theme of sin and its remedy. The discussion of each book will also begin with a basic orientation to its canonical literary shape, then consider particular passages and general lexical and thematic trends, ending with a reflection on its contribution to the theme" (pp. 12–13).

A Severe Mercy is an extensive study, including much close work in the selected texts, reflection of wide reading, and regular interaction with current scholarship in both the running content and in substantive content footnotes throughout. Boda's typical method is to provide a summary introduction of a given book, then move to consider what that book contributes to the study of his theme by examining it in smaller divisions, sometimes actually surveying the whole and sometimes not. For example, after introducing the book of Joshua, he then examines the content using the following divisions: 1:1–9; chapters 2–20; chapter 22; chapter 23; chapter 24 (pp. 126–36).

Within his examination of a given division, Boda normally focuses on key terms, particularly repeated terms, that help to signal particular ideas about his topic (e.g. see 153 on "deuteronomic vocabulary"). He also sometimes provides tables that give extended graphic depiction of the occurrence of important terms (Table 9.1, 146–47).

The extensive nature of the work can present a challenge for grasping and assimilating important findings, but Boda remedies this problem by offering frequent succinct statements of important insights. Examples are practical theological insights from the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (pp. 26–27), important principles highlighted in the record of the demise of Eli's family line (p. 150), and key motifs from the story of David (p. 162).

Since Boda's goal was to trace the presentation of theology of sin and its remedy in the canonical form and shape of the Hebrew Bible, one would expect to see in the work evidence of continuity of focus on elements of the theme extending throughout the whole. In his treatment of the book of Exodus, and more specifically 34:6–7, Boda highlights ideas he sees reprised repeatedly in the larger canon: the "character creed," the role of mediator, intergenerational culpability, and the mitigation of punishment (pp. 42–48). Of course, one would expect to see this pattern repeated in the Torah as a whole (pp. 120–21), but these ideas are prominent in the Former Prophets as well (pp. 145, 163–64, 185–88), and also occur in the Book of the Twelve (pp. 307, 317–18), the Psalms (pp. 424–25, 435), Lamentations (p. 459), and Ezra-Nehemiah (p. 485). Of course, Boda's final summary reinforces this perspective as well.

This brief focus on continuity and connectedness, however, should not give the impression of canonical uniformity on the theme in view. One of the stimulating aspects

of Boda's work is his attention to differences of perspective and presentation in the different canonical materials and sections. One interesting example is his suggestion that Nahum reflects the content of Exodus 34:6–7, but for the purposes of highlighting the opposite of God's gracious action—unmitigated judgment on Nineveh (pp. 324–25).

A few caveats are in order as well. The first one addresses the nature of Boda's "beginnings" in treating Genesis 1–11. Boda sees the dominant perspective of this section as negative: "To this point, the story of humanity has been focused largely on the introduction and enduring presence of sin on earth" (p. 23). He does give place, however, to the reality of hope, rooted in God's creation intentions (p. 33), and ends the chapter on this more positive note (p. 34). I would say that one's conclusion on the matter depends on whether one's focus is on the person of God or on the people God made. The primary thrust of these early materials is positive, reflected in creation intentions. The complication comes from people, but God's good purposes prevail and constitute the only reason the story continues. Perhaps a part of the reason for Boda's perspective is his understanding that the people are cursed as a result of their disobedience (p. 19). But the text of Genesis 3 clearly only applies the word "curse" to the serpent, not the people; the ground is cursed because of man's sin. Certainly, the non-occurrence of the term "curse" is significant given its opposite, the key word "blessing." Since the man and woman suffer mitigated judgment, not curse (negation of blessing), the possibility of experiencing blessing (fruitfulness, multiplication) still exists and any mention of reproductive activity signals the positive possibilities of blessing rooted in God's creation intentions. Ironically, when he talks about Cain, Boda says he was judged more severely, but actually, he is the first person to be cursed, and of course his prospects serve as a striking contrast to the prospects of Adam and Eve.

The second caveat pertains to the length of the work. Some introductions are running summaries of familiar materials. Perhaps some brutal editing might have shortened the tome without eliminating any content important to the purpose.

A last caveat is a minor one but worth mentioning since the description of the approach implies an examination of all the biblical materials (notwithstanding selective treatment within some sections). The work contains no treatment of the books of Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. If the study is comprehensive, one would expect at least a mention of the materials and some brief assessment regarding why these materials are not pertinent.

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Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach. By Richard Harvey. Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009, 316 pp., $22.99 paper.

The world of Messianic Judaism is not a monolithic entity, neither past nor present. Whether in the first century or the twenty-first century, what is the perception of a Jew who accepts Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah in the synagogue or in the church?

Richard Harvey has produced a very helpful text on this entangled topic. He presents a well-balanced panorama of the history of Messianic Jewish history and theology. He notes, "Messianic Judaism is both an ancient movement and a very modern movement. The earliest followers of Yeshua (Jesus) were Jewish and they did not consider their faith in Yeshua as a replacement of one religion (Judaism) with another (Christianity)" (p. xi).

With the recent deaths of Jews For Jesus founder Moishe Rosen and Jewish messianic activist Zola Levitt, a substantive review and mapping of the current status of the messianic movements related to Jesus of Nazareth is needed. Harvey has garnered input from many leaders in these movements, including the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelsim (p. xiii).

Harvey begins by stating, "Messianic Judaism is the religion of Jewish people who believe in Jesus (Yeshua) as the promised Messiah" (p. 1). He continues by pointing out that "a definition of Messianic Judaism . . . has been under negotiation since their introduction . . . and is problematic because of the 'decentralized and fluid nature of the movement' " (p. 8). This has led to an identification crisis for some within the ranks and no agreed upon definition (p. 9).

However, what has added to the nomenclature tension is the emergence of other messianic movements in Judaism over the past century. Now many Lubavitcher Jews are claiming the messiahship of their deceased leader Menachem Schneerson (pp. 122–23). Disciples of deceased Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri are embracing his messianic dreams and left behind messages in their search for the messiah, not to mention the worldwide Orthodox Jewish population who seek a future messiah. Each group would consider itself messianist, though not believers in Yeshua.

Perhaps Rosen's chosen designation may be far more accurate than once thought. Hence, Jews For Jesus quickly differentiates a Jewish person from "Jews For Schneerson" or "Jews for the Coming Messianic Era." Even the "more generic Jewish Believers in Yeshua (JBY) refers to all believers in Jesus who are Jewish" (p. 12).

Beyond examining the nomenclature issue, Harvey's major aim is "to explain the nature of Messianic Jewish theology, identifying its sources, norms, methods, content and results" (p. 5). He states, "No previous study has focused on the theology of the movement or assessed it theologically" (p. 5). Prior to his theological mapping, Harvey presents an overview of several unique anthropological approaches to Messianic Judaism (pp. 14–25), followed by established social psychological approaches (pp. 26–34), then former theological approaches to the movement (pp. 40–48).

Specified is the reality that "Messianic Jewish Theology has developed in the light of its Protestant Evangelical background and engagement with Jewish concerns" (p. 4). Harvey delineates, "I adopt the traditional subject divisions found in Jewish theology, of God, Torah and Israel—and it being a mapping of the theological territory and not a full-blown exposition of these concepts" (pp. 12–13).

Concerning the doctrine of God voyage in Messianic Judaism, he notes that no previous study has examined the question of God in Messianic Judaism" (p. 49). This is unusual since the doctrine is primary in Judaism and Christianity. Harvey believes that a Messianic Jewish theology of God must be articulated for a serious consideration of the movement to be made. He explains: "That Messianic Judaism has begun to take up this challenge is apparent, but further reflection and exposition is needed to articulate a fully developed Messianic Jewish understanding of God" (p. 94). He sees their future contribution as pertinent and essential if the movement is to be taken seriously.

Regarding the doctrine of Messiah and the divinity of Yeshua (Jesus), current debate and doctrinal definitions are being refined. Key discussions as to when does a Messianist enter into the arena of being a heretic in issues related to Trinitarianism (p. 97) have moved the old Nicene conclusions forward in the movement.

Messianic Jewish theologians such as Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Daniel Juster, David Stern, and Louis Goldberg have dealt with different levels of incarnational Christology. Methodology and Hebrew categories have been the struggle to date. Harvey cautiously proclaims, "Messianic Jews need to avoid both an arid Biblicism and a shallow Trinitarianism in their search for an appropriate Christology and Trinitarian theology"

(p. 139). He adds, "The task of Messianic Jewish theology is thus to appropriate and re-express a Jewish expression of belief in the Messiah which allows room for Trinitarian and incarnational thought" (p. 139).

In terms of strengths, the author has captured new ground in his historical overview of the history of the movement from the first century to the twenty-first. He has taken the bull by the horns and wrestled it down and added much insight to this important topic. He makes a good attempt to excavate through the stratigraphy of current submovements and their theologies within the history of the Messianic Jewish realm. Especially helpful is the interaction of the primary Messianic Jewish leaders over the past two centuries. If Judaism at large does not relegate Lubavitcher Jews as non-Jews because many of them hold to a position of "Jews For Schneerson," then logically the "Jews For Jesus" movements will have to be seen as a legitimate member under the multifaceted umbrella of Judaism. This book is a solid resource on Messianic Judaism and will be well-worn in my personal research.

Regarding weaknesses, a panoramic chart of key individuals, groups, and organizations pertinent to the study would be helpful. The study also would be much stronger if a serious analysis of the famous Disputations at Paris (AD 1240), Barcelona (AD 1263), Navarre (AD 1375), and Tortosa (AD 1412) were added and drawn into the discussions. Doctrinally, many of the dots cannot be connected apart from the major context the disputations provide in the past millennia of Jewish messianic history. Apart from these concerns, the volume is a must for Messianic Jewish history and theology.

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Parables and Conflict in the Hebrew Bible. By Jeremy Schipper. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, xiv + 168 pp., $85.00.

The Hebrew term *mashal* (pl. *meshalim*) appears thirty-nine times in the Hebrew Bible. Its basic meaning of "comparison" encompasses various types of discourse, especially the proverb (e.g. Prov 1:1) and parable (cf. Ezek 17:2; 24:3; NRSV: "allegory"). The use of the term in Ezekiel, where it stands as a title (along with *hidah* in 17:2) for the subsequent short stories allegorically applied to Ezekiel's listeners, establishes it as the appropriate Hebrew term for other OT instances of what we call parables, though these other instances lack the title *mashal* itself. In his new book, Jeremy Schipper analyzes the parables in the prose portions of the Hebrew Bible (i.e. the Deuteronomistic History), thus aiming "to reinvigorate the scholarly study of Hebrew Bible parables by providing innovative readings of selected texts and by framing these readings within established scholarly conversation" (p. x).

Chapter 1 tackles the usual questions concerned with defining the object of study. Schipper states that scholars now define *meshalim* by function rather than by genre, as had been the case in previous decades. Each *mashal* functions as a comparison (whether it be proverb, parable, or other), but only parabolic *meshalim* receive treatment in this volume. As for their definition, the author asserts, "We define parables in the Hebrew Bible as short stories from any narrative genre that function as explicit comparisons created by a biblical character rather than the reader" (p. 2).

Since the term "parable" does not concern genre but rather function (comparison), Schipper sees it as one of his main goals to bring the question of genre more prominently into the discussion of each parable (pp. 7–10). As each chapter examines in turn one parable from the historical books, we learn the genre of the parable under discussion

and how the use of this genre contributes rhetorically toward the goals of the speaker. Thus, Schipper (chap. 2) identifies the genre of Jotham's parable (Judg 9:7–21) as a fable containing a curse that sees fulfillment in the subsequent narrative; Nathan's parable (2 Sam 12:1–14) as a fable (not a juridical parable) that allows Nathan to focus attention away from international politics and onto David's destruction of a family unit (chap. 3); the parable of the Wise Woman of Tekoa (2 Sam 14:1–20) as a petitionary narrative that enables David to defer to Joab in the case of Absalom without himself losing face (chap. 4); the parable that a nameless prophet speaks to Ahab (1 Kgs 20:35–43) as a petitionary narrative aimed at exposing Ahab's incompetence (chap. 5); and Jehoash's parable (2 Kgs 14:8–14) as a fable of the disputation genre (p. 104) designed to precipitate war with Amaziah (chap. 6). A final chapter (chap. 7) extends this analysis into the prophetic books by examining Isaiah 5:1–7 and Ezekiel 17:1–24.

Whereas parables are usually interpreted as attempts at avoiding or minimizing conflict, Schipper takes the opposite approach (thus the title of the book). He says, "In short, we found that parables (1) intensify announcements of judgment and condemnation rather than call for a change of behavior or facilitate conflict resolution; and (2) perform this intensifying function by invoking specific genres to address the speaker's specific communicative needs" (p. 111). Such conflict or condemnation usually results from the failure of the addressee to understand precisely the point of the parable, a possible goal for parabolic discourse (pp. 12–18; cf. Matt 13:10–17!). For instance, Schipper suggests that David interpreted the poor man in Nathan's parable as Bathsheba, the rich man as Joab, the ewe-lamb as Uriah, and himself as the traveler (pp. 46–49). If so, David may have been promising the punishment of Joab (the "rich man" responsible for Uriah's death; cf. 2 Sam 11:14–25) in 2 Samuel 12:5–6 when Nathan declared to him, "You are the man!" (12:7).

With only 123 pages of text followed by 23 pages of notes, the book is a quick and easy read. Schipper deals exclusively with the final form of the biblical text and looks skeptically at redactional solutions to perceived tensions between parables and their narrative contexts (pp. 10–12, 27–29).

Schipper succeeds in highlighting the importance of genre-analysis for these parables; yet, he fails to demonstrate a significant exegetical harvest as his readings are rarely exciting and distinctive. The presentation of Nathan's parable and David's interpretation of it (chap. 3) is interesting and plausible, but Schipper himself characterizes this as the "creative highpoint" of the book (p. x), which (correctly) implies that the other chapters are not as innovative. Nevertheless, for those interested in the role of parables in the Hebrew Bible or who seek a close reading of the particular passages discussed by Schipper, this book will prove helpful.

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Introduction to the Historical Books: Strategies for Reading. By Steven L. McKenzie. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, vii + 169 pp., $18.00 paper.

Steven McKenzie prefaces his survey of the historical books with three chapters that guide his understandings of these texts and provide an important foundation for an informed reading of his conclusions. The first—"In Search of the Historical Books"—deals succinctly with issues that would require much more space to cover adequately. Yet, for an introductory-level book, he provides a fitting description for those who are not as familiar with such issues as the significance of the historical genre, various approaches

to reading ancient historical writings, and the character of historical writings as etiological and theological. The emphasis upon the writers as theologians, which is introduced here and carried throughout the book, is most welcome in these discussions.

For the evangelical, McKenzie's approach to reading ancient historical books will be somewhat disconcerting, given that he follows Van Seters closely in this regard and gives little credence to those who would argue for reading these books as recording history accurately. He recognizes that conclusions by archaeologists and historians that regard biblical history as erroneous (or at least misleading) will at times be dismissed as bias "particularly among people of faith" (p. 8). McKenzie, who seems sympathetic and appeals for the acceptance of such scholars, counters with the role of genre in this regard and concludes, "The source of the discrepancy [in the Bible's record of history] may lie not with the Bible per se but with the way in which it has been read" (p. 8).

In chapter 2, "The Works behind the Historical Books," the author discusses the general theory of the Deuteronomistic History and the misleading nature of the Chronicler's History. For those uninitiated into these discussions, McKenzie's comments are valuable in introducing these concepts, even if one does not regard his suppositions as valid. The final introductory chapter, "Methods and Approaches to the Historical Books," provides the needed background into contemporary methods of reading the historical books. Approaches that are both diachronic (e.g. literary and form criticism) and synchronic (canonical and narrative criticisms) are discussed, showing their significance to reading the historical books. In his conclusion to this chapter, McKenzie indicates that the primary goal of his book is to synthesize the conclusions reached by various reading strategies to the text believing that implementing such approaches "guide[s] readers and help[s] them to examine the biblical text carefully" (p. 38). Thus, in the remainder of the book, McKenzie walks systematically through those books he has labeled as historical: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah.

I was particularly interested in reading the book because of the subtitle—"Strategies for Reading." For the most part, I was pleased with some of his conclusions in light of his stated purpose for the book, such as the recommendation to read Joshua with "an awareness of the tensions in the book" that reflect different perspectives within the books "unitary message" (p. 56). Yet, I found that too little attention was given to these issues and that the comments were more motivated by a literary approach rather than originating from the textual strategies of the authors. In addition, it is somewhat baffling that a separate section for this was not provided for Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah.

McKenzie's work makes a valuable contribution to the classroom in that he has provided an introduction to these books that is readily accessible for students of all levels. Readers will receive quality, succinct summaries of content for each book that are accentuated by the author's theological observations. For the professor, this text provides an appropriate platform by which contemporary hermeneutical and critical approaches to the OT might be taught and assessed without requiring students to read longer, more technical works on these topics. But the ones who will find this work most valuable are those who are more prone to read these books as McKenzie, convinced of: (1) a more ahistorical approach; (2) the validity of Deuteronomistic History; and (3) an acceptance of the category of historical books, as opposed to the significance of the canonical ordering the books in the Hebrew Bible.

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Unlocking Wisdom: Forming Agents of God in the House of Mourning. By James Reitman. Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2008, 384 pp., $19.95.

The author of this fine book is a medical doctor who has served for a number of years in the U.S. military, but who has also been heavily involved in Christian ministry for many years. He holds an M.A. from Dallas Theological Seminary in addition to his medical degree. Part of the impetus for the writing of this book derives from ethical issues the author encountered in his military medical practice, particularly in the matter of end-of-life decisions. It is a unique commentary on the books of Job and Ecclesiastes, and includes an account of the effect the study of these books has had on his outlook on life and ministry. It is the result of more than twenty years of intensive study.

In introducing his commentaries, Reitman describes his hermeneutical approach, which is based primarily on Grant Osborne's *Hermeneutical Spiral* and Elliott Johnson's *Expository Hermeneutics*. The commentaries themselves are remarkably informative in a brief format. He uses the Jensen system of outlining the books, and makes extensive use of footnotes to provide meaningful elucidations of the comments in the main text. They are important in helping to understand the progress of the arguments. Reitman has read widely and frequently interacts with other authors.

What makes this book unique is not only the description of his own interaction with these books, but also the linking of Job and Ecclesiastes together as tools in the search for wisdom. His thesis, in his own words, is this:

> The book of Job is less about reconciling God's character with innocent suffering than about the opportunity presented by such suffering for us to relinquish self-sufficiency and more effectively mediate God's government of Creation. Similarly, Ecclesiastes is not just a cynical tract proclaiming the futility of life without God. Rather, the author's compiled proverbs and reflections evolve from *justified cynicism* over the inevitable futility of self-sufficiency to an *informed optimism* that the one who fears God can indeed find a lasting legacy in the inscrutable work of God. In both Job and Ecclesiastes, readers are challenged to embrace the agency that their Creator has entrusted to them. This entails facing disillusionment in adversity with authentic mourning, forsaking self-sufficiency, and enlisting wisdom's advantage in the fear of God in order to accomplish God's preordained purposes and receive an inheritance in the work of God." (p. 25)

As the title of the book indicates, the conclusion of both books is that only as man submits totally to God can he come to terms with the issues of life. True wisdom lies in the acknowledgement that God's ways are always right and good, whether or not we understand the whys and the wherefores. God is also the only true guide to a meaningful life. To fear God is to admit that he alone has the right to dictate what is right and good for man. When Job humbles himself before God with an enhanced knowledge of his own sinfulness and inadequacy, the tide begins to turn for him. When the frame narrator of Ecclesiastes (whom Reitman assumes to be other than Qoheleth) concludes the book, he states that when all is said and done, man's whole function of life and action is to fear God. This is the answer to what life is all about.

I do want to raise a few questions regarding Reitman's analyses in certain areas. First, the view that the book of Job represents a courtroom setting may not sufficiently take into account that one of the participants is in a deeply afflicted state, both physically and emotionally. How can one expect that every word he utters must be taken at full face value, to be discussed and torn apart by those who are sound of body and of mind, bent on proving the patient to be guilty of presumed sins?

Second, should Job not receive more credit than Reitman gives him for those sudden bursts of insight that express his sincere hope of a resurrection to eternal life in the presence of his God (14:13–17; 19:25–27)? Can it not be that just as his humanness and innate sinfulness comes to the fore as he tries to justify himself before his accusers, that just so is his basic trust in God's ultimate purpose revealed? One might also wonder if God's commendation of Job and his condemnation of his three friends (42:7) might not only refer to Job's immediate and heartfelt repentance, but may reflect God's understanding of Job's basic integrity, despite the rashness of his attempts to challenge God, while the "comforters" misjudge him.

Third, in linking these two books together as Reitman does, one first gets the impression that the main concern of Qoheleth is that of injustice, when he states (p. 13) that "Job reacts to the futility of unjust suffering from the perspective of the *maligned victim*; Qoheleth reflects on the futility of all his achievements from the viewpoint of *ambitious oppressor*." In actual fact, this is just one of Qoheleth's concerns, and a look at Reitman's commentary shows that he understands this. However, it hardly seems to be clear that the injustice described in 3:16 and 4:1–3 is the result of Qoheleth's former actions.

One need not agree with all of Reitman's views on certain particulars in order to agree with his basic conclusions and to profit from the study of the book. There are many rich and thoughtful insights as well as practical applications for the reader. Not the least of these insights is that it is only when man comes to realize the limitations of his human wisdom and understanding that he is able to appreciate and tap in to godly wisdom. This occurs for Job when first Elihu and then God set him straight, bringing him to repentance. For Qoheleth it follows 6:12, when he realizes that human wisdom is severely limited. From that point on the book takes on a much more positive tone, including numerous proverbial comments, concluding with statement that what really matters is to fear God.

Reitman offers us much food for thought in the practical application of Job and Ecclesiastes.

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Themes and Transformations in Old Testament Prophecy. By Samuel A. Meier. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009, 240 pp., $23.00.

In this work and to his credit, Samuel Meier attempts the monumental task of uncovering and elucidating major common features that run through the prophets as *leitmotifs*. He recognizes that these motifs, which are at the very core of the prophetic mission, are often left unexplored in introductory works on the prophets. His book is not intended for novices to the biblical text but for readers already familiar with its pages, though the author welcomes newcomers. Meier cautions those who come to drink from this work not to look for information concerning the times and sources of the prophets, since this can be found in the standard works. Instead, the reader should seek to uncover the over arching themes that permeate the books of the prophets juxtaposed with the unique contributions of each and viewed diachronically.

Though Meier grants the critical view that the final form of the prophetic books embodies the work of authors, disciples, and redactors, he states that these works will be investigated in their final form, utilizing only those prophetic books that possess a broad consensus concerning their date and authorship. Not surprisingly, Meier locates

the national tragedy and upheaval caused by the Babylonian invasion and exile as an important place to search for changes in prophetic themes.

A major linchpin in Meier's work is his claim that it is the degeneration in the prophet's privileged access to Yahweh's divine council that provides the key to discovering both the unity and diversity of the prophetic messages delivered in the middle four centuries of the first millennium BC. Indeed, the succeeding chapters focus on "other transmutations of the prophet's role that are related to his position as one of God's counselors" (p. 27), the first of which is a concomitant downgrade in the ability of the prophets to influence the future of God's dealings with his people and the world. While the pre-exilic prophets' counsel could stay God's hand from immediate judgment (Amos 5:15), the oracular utterance of the postexilic prophets is fixed, betraying a cause and effect correspondence (e.g. Hag 1:8–9) without possibility of change. This phenomenon ultimately degrades to the universal fixed decrees of the apocalyptic material found in Daniel. For Meier, not only does the future become fixed when the prophet ceases to have access to the divine throne room, but the seer loses his ability to understand and interpret the divine revelation he is given.

Other evidence martialed includes: (1) the transition from direct conversation with Yahweh by the pre-exilic prophetic spokesmen to one mediated by angels in the postexilic period; (2) the increasing later tendency to demarcate Yahweh's words by "thus saith the Lord" or a variant thereof; and (3) the change from oral poetic oracular utterances in the pre-exilic prophecies to written prose oracles by the postexilic period. The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel illustrate this change well with their emphasis on written documents. Not only does Meier note the increasing tendency toward written oracles by later prophets, but he also points to the later prophetic penchant for dating specific oracles in contrast to the lack of specificity in the pre-exilic prophets (e.g. Ezekiel's dating correlated with Jehoiachin's exile). The absence of miracles in the writing prophets compared to the earlier wonders worked by the preliterary prophets Elijah and Elisha comprise another transition in the nature of prophecy well portrayed by the Deuteronomic historian. Finally, Meier points to the loss of the relationship between the prophet as Yahweh's military spokesman (liaison) and advisor to the king as another significant change in prophecy and the prophetic office that was finalized in the cataclysm resulting from the Babylonian invasion-exile.

These numerous changes in prophetic themes should not be taken to imply that there is no continuity to the prophetic message and office that unifies their work. The reuse of prophetic traditions in the prophets and the Deuteronomistic history reveals a focus on "patterns in history and God's dealings with humans" grounded in covenant that even transcend God's specific relationship with his people Israel (p. 171). Turning to the question of the non-negotiable features of the prophetic office, Meier distills four as the marks of a true prophet who must be heeded: (1) dependence on God for support; (2) the preponderance of oracular critique in the message proclaimed; (3) the prophet's minority status within the guild and reception of their message by the community of faith; and (4) the prophet's accuracy in predicting the future. Meier postulates that the multiplication of false prophets during the spiritual storm preceding the exile may have aided in diminishing the role of the prophet in postexilic Israel.

This work might be critiqued at a number of points, not the least of which is anchoring prophetic transformations tightly to the prophet's status in relationship to the divine council. While I am quite ready to admit with Meier the council's importance in understanding particular prophetic materials, can the textual evidence really demonstrate that it is a main cause of the subsequent deterioration in prophetic ability? Such a claim (p. 26, n. 10) is open to question. For example, Meier's recognition that Isaiah 40:1–6 refers to the divine council would better support his case if uttered by the eighth century Isaiah of Jerusalem than by the exilic literary genius known as Deutero-Isaiah.

The same could be said of his correct classification of Isaiah 40–66, Obadiah, and Joel as primarily poetry when their commonly asserted late dating does not support his view that prosaic oracles are late.

Other problems with Meier's work come to mind, one of which is the entire notion of prophetic "deterioration." It smacks of the old critical claim (Duhm et al.) that the early prophets were the pure founders of an Israelite religion that ultimately degenerated into the ritualistic legalism supposedly found in the postexilic prophets. Echoes of this seem to appear in Meier's separation between the poetry he finds indicative of the earlier prophets in contrast to the prosaic material found in the postexilic prophetic works. He has even included an appendix critiquing attempts in several recent translations to find poetry in Malachi's clearly postexilic work. Part of the case he makes for the degeneration of prophecy might also be interpreted as merely the loss of prophecy as a whole without regard to any gradual deterioration in the abilities of or change in the message of its practitioners. The cessation of the prophetic gift by the time of Christ makes the arrival of John the Baptist as a voice crying in the wilderness all the more striking.

Despite these reservations, Meier's book betrays careful analysis and bravely tackles a difficult subject while offering much food for thought concerning the essential features of prophecy. Thus, it deserves a place at the table in any future discussions of what is irreducible about the prophetic office and message along with works such as *The Prophets: A Sheffield Reader* edited by P. R. Davies.

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The Ten Commandments. By Patrick D. Miller. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010, 477 pp. $39.95.

Patrick D. Miller's *The Ten Commandments* represents the introduction of a new phase in WJK Press's *Interpretation* commentary series that will focus on specific passages, themes, and topics the editors believe to be of particular interest. Miller, who is the Charles T. Haley Professor of Old Testament Theology Emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary, states that the "main goal of the book is to probe deeply into the meaning and complexity of the Commandments and the way they are developed, elaborated, and specified in the whole of Scriptures" (p. xiii). Overall, Miller's work is a well written, nicely organized, and sufficiently documented discussion of the Decalogue, and the book's strengths greatly outweigh its deficiencies.

The comprehensive manner in which Miller develops this project is one of the great strengths of this book. While he does interact with each command individually, the author's primary project is to demonstrate how the commandments function as a whole. One discovers this almost immediately as Miller discusses the foundational context and meaning of Decalogue in chapter 1. Not only does he provide a helpful discussion of how and why various traditions number the commands as they do, but he nicely demonstrates how the prologue and the first and second commands (as Protestants traditionally number them) are together foundational for understanding the Decalogue as a whole. Throughout the work, the author likewise demonstrates how each command has particular applications, but must always be seen as part of a greater whole. While such an approach places less emphasis on the ethical and moral implications of each commandment, it is quite helpful in terms of understanding the nature and function of the Decalogue as an entire unit. Indeed, this comprehensive approach makes Miller's

book a fine companion to other volumes like John Frame's *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, which develop more particular ethical implications by looking at the moral and theological issues that unfold from each commandment.

A second strength of Miller's book is the manner in which he goes beyond a discussion of each commandment as it falls in its original context (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5), to a discussion of how each command shapes other passages of Scripture and how its meaning is clarified or amplified by other parts of the Bible. As Miller puts it, he seeks to "explore their resonances and reflections in the rest of Scripture" (p. xii). For each command, Miller does a nice job showing how the commandment is picked up in the legal, poetic, and prophetic writings of the OT, in the NT where the commandments are explicitly quoted, and also where they influence the NT writers in a less direct manner. This canonical approach makes *The Ten Commandments* a helpful ministry preparation tool for both the pastor preparing sermons as well as the ethics student or teacher preparing papers or lesson plans.

Third, whether or not one agrees with all of Miller's particular arguments and conclusions, the manner in which he treats the Decalogue is helpful for understanding how the Decalogue is far more than a mere list of behavior-modifying commands or simple deontic principles. Miller helps the reader to see how the Decalogue provides the pattern for a people who are called out by God to be his covenant children and who are to be conformed in character to his nature. That is, God gave us the commandments so they would shape both our character and our actions. They are meant to form both who we are and what we do.

Finally, in terms of strengths, the appendix Miller includes, entitled "The Ethics of the Commandments," is both necessary and beneficial. While there could certainly be much more said in this book about how the commandments should function in a comprehensive ethical theory (more on this below), such was not the purpose or goal of Miller's project. Recognizing this, however, one can hardly attempt a discussion on the Decalogue without addressing the ethical nature of the commandments as a whole and how they ought to shape all ethical theories and methodologies. Indeed, without this appendix, I would have to say that the lack of such a discussion would be a major negative in this book. This addition, however, supplies the reader with an adequate—and at points, very insightful—discussion of what ethicists describe as a "divine command theory" of ethics and how that may be understood to apply to one's interpretation and application of the Decalogue in everyday life.

Having lauded Miller's work, let me now simply say that in terms of weaknesses I think Miller would have been well served to have given the reader a clearer understanding of his own ethical framework. Despite the fact that his primary goal was not to provide an ethical treatise, the disclosure of Miller's ethical framework is necessary because any attempt to make application of the commands to practical living requires some form of ethical theory, whether one knows it or not. When an author makes ethical assertions, without explaining the ethical framework that leads him to a conclusion, he does his readers a disservice. To Miller's credit, this does not happen often. However, one glaring example of this takes place in Miller's discussion of truth-telling and the commandment not to bear false witness. After an otherwise valuable development of the commandment, Miller argues that the "continuing trajectory of the commandment" leads him to conclude that there is a caveat built into this commandment in which truth telling may be a norm derived from this commandment, but that "it may not always be the moral choice" (p. 384). This is an unfortunate comment because, in certain contexts, it unnecessarily pits obedience of the commandment against morality.

Miller's working assumption, then, is that the commandment is only *prima facie*, binding in light of context and predicted consequences. This line of reasoning puts the moral agent in the position of determining whether lying in some circumstances is the

most fitting response. This form of ethical reasoning imports the idea that there is some moral standard outside of the commandment by which one could judge whether or not the commandment should apply in that particular case. But where does one get such knowledge? How does one discover this standard? The lack of clarity related to Miller's ethical framework leaves the reader feeling rather ambiguous as to how he could reach this conclusion. To be fair, Miller does attempt to use two narrative passages (Exodus 1 and Joshua 2) to support his conclusion, but provides no depth of exegesis on those passages to demonstrate how they actually support his conclusion when all other didactic teaching in Scripture on truth-telling actually leads to the opposite conclusion.

In conclusion, I believe that despite this lack of ethical development, the strengths of Miller's work far outweigh the negatives. This is a volume I will mine for both personal study and the development of classroom lectures. It is a volume I strongly recommend.

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The Theology of the Book of Genesis. Old Testament Theology. By R. W. L. Moberly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, xxiv + 272 pp., $23.99.

The Theology of Genesis by R. W. L. Moberly is the second volume released in the emerging series Old Testament Theology (edited by Brent A. Strawn and Patrick D. Miller). Moberly is Professor of Theology and Biblical Interpretation at Durham, and his diverse writings in biblical-theological subjects richly inform his discussion of the theology of Genesis.

Acknowledging that many have brought their modern theological preconceptions to Genesis wishing to find something different, Moberly states, "It is the thesis of this book that a theology of Genesis needs to be more than philology and history, primarily because Genesis is not a freestanding ancient text, like the Epic of Gilgamesh, but is part of the authoritative scriptures of synagogue and church" (p. 6). True to his goals, Moberly's discussion interacts with Jewish and Christian writers, pre-critical and critical, and ancient as well as postmodern interpretative concerns. Throughout his discussion, Moberly's approach uses an exegetical-canonical analysis, routinely engaging contemporary debates that surround the text and interacting with Genesis in the context of its reception and use. Employing these diverse elements, according to Moberly, creates *plausibility structure* (p. 7).

From issues of method to points in the history of interpretation—ancient text to contemporary context—the discussion is reflective and balanced. Necessarily selective, the format of the chapters includes an illustrative reading (e.g. James Barr, Stanley Hauerwas, Richard Dawkins, Jon D. Levenson, Karl-Josef Kuschel, Isaac La Peyrère, Gerhard von Rad, and more) followed by interaction with the interpretative tradition. Moberly then attempts to demonstrate how in his view, a canonical approach offers the better grasp of the text and its socio-religious concerns. The book is comprised of twelve chapters: "What is a 'Theology of Genesis'?" (pp. 1–20); "On Reading Genesis 1–11" (pp. 21–41); "Genesis 1: Picturing the World" (pp. 42–69); "Genesis 2–3: Adam and Eve and 'the Fall'" (pp. 70–87); "Genesis 4: Cain and Abel" (pp. 88–101); "Genesis 6–9: Cataclysm and Grace" (pp. 102–20); "On Reading Genesis 12–50" (pp. 121–40); "Genesis 12:1–3: A Key to Interpreting the Old Testament?" (pp. 141–61); "Genesis 12:3a: A Biblical Basis for Christian Zionism?" (pp. 162–78); "Genesis 22: Abraham—Model or Monster?" (pp. 179–99); "Abraham and the 'Abrahamic Faiths'" (pp. 200–224);

and "Genesis 37–50: Is Joseph Wise?" (pp. 225–45). The book concludes with an annotated reading list of Genesis material, along with author, Scripture, and subject indexes (pp. 247–72). We will explore some of these chapters.

In chapter 1, "What is a 'Theology of Genesis'?" Moberly considers a gauntlet of definitions. Beyond the merits of religious history and the result of *Israelite religion*, Moberly contends that one cannot come to the text "cold," but in the context of enduring cultural reception. Quoting Brevard Childs, Moberly demands a show of the text's enduring significance, in addition to exegesis, whether in Jewish or Christian expression (p. 7). Observing that ideological criticism tends to read against the grain (drawing from David Clines), Moberly questions the value of historical flattening and ethical minimizing that "oppositional" reading often produces. Moberly wants a heuristic approach that allows for other interpretative considerations to "recontextualize" Genesis—one that ultimately gathers the NT into a canonical reading (pp. 14–15). Moberly reads Genesis, then, within "the meeting of biblical text with canonical context and the ongoing life of communities of faith" (p. 17).

Chapter 2, "On Reading Genesis 1–11," includes a helpful discussion of conflicts between the Bible and "other forms of knowledge" (e.g. creationism). Moberly grounds this discussion in the matrix of the narrator, ancient Israel, and the history of literature and writing practice—a rigorous hermeneutic ideological readings typically ignore. This, for Moberly, is the necessary interpretative lens capable of responsibly handling complex genre issues in Genesis 1–11. "Historicizing" Hebrew linguistic depiction for God and Adam is a potent illustration (pp. 34–36). While many polarities can be set up (e.g. human and divine roles), Moberly claims that "the real challenge is to grasp *how these belong together*" (p. 40, emphasis original).

Thus, reading Genesis theologically "is concerned with *understanding*, a way of thinking, and relatedly living, that is always open to further development and deepening, rather than *explanation*, which is the purview of science" (p. 64, emphasis original). In this way, Moberly sets up a vibrant context for the discussion of chaos and divine sovereignty in Jon D. Levenson's *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). Moberly's discussion of key psalms and their theological contribution (pp. 66–68 [Psalms 44, 89], 81 [Psalm 62]) deepens the theology of Genesis and illustrates his commitment to a canonical reading.

Chapter 7, "On Reading Genesis 12–50," begins by comparing three general approaches: (1) Jewish observance of Torah in light of the Patriarchs (i.e. assimilating pre-torah characters to a torah context); (2) Genesis as a compositional and religio-historical problem (i.e. difficulties in vocabulary, chronology, and literary function seem to require a plurality of authors); and (3) a canonical approach. For Moberly, the canonical is best for theology because it not only draws on the strengths of both premodern and modern approaches, but it also develops the conceptuality of collated and interwoven texts as a "religiously authoritative collection of writings for ongoing generations" (p. 131). Moberly is well aware of the critical issues in Genesis (e.g. revelation of the divine name and patriarchal religion, pp. 131–36), but chooses instead to "focus on the received form of the Pentateuch and the theological issues it poses" (p. 137).

Moberly develops a retrospective reading of the data, "molding" the biblical material of the patriarchs to make the theological truths more accessible for national Israel. For example, Abraham's emergence from Egypt amid plagues and wealth (Gen 12:10–20) anticipates Israel's own drama. This kind of *recontextualizing* of material is theologically significant (p. 139; cf. Gen 22:1, 20 with Exod 20:20).

In possibly his most thought provoking chapter—"Genesis 12:1–3: A Key to Interpreting the Old Testament?"—Moberly uses Richard Bauckham and Christopher J. H. Wright as an exegetical foil to argue that Gentile mission cannot be tied to Gen 12:1–3

as so many scholars claim (cf. Gal 3:6–9). Moberly poses the question: "May the nations constitute the backdrop *in spite of whom* . . . rather than *for the sake of whom* Abraham will become a great nation?" (p. 149, emphasis original). For Moberly, this text engenders hope for Abraham himself, the NT counterpart of which would be Jesus' promise to Peter regarding the church (Matt 16:18), not the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20). However, I think this is a false dichotomy; rather, the text presents a situation of "both and." Moberly misses an opportunity to highlight the *theological development* of this covenantal theme within Genesis itself(!), evident in Gen 18:18–19 and the causal clause in 22:18, "Because you have obeyed me, all the nations." This latter text also counters Moberly's claim that "the divine promises that follow do not specify Abraham's obedience as a condition" (p. 170).

His discussion of "Christian Zionism" (pp. 162–78) is a good illustration of exegetical-theological engagement, especially as it includes contemporary lived experience—a crucial concern in biblical theology. Moberly's explanation of promise as "response seeking" (p. 172) is stimulating fodder for any theological tradition concerned with social ethics and politics, regardless of how one defines the "un/conditional" language (see esp. pp. 172–74).

The author's discussion of Genesis 37–50 ("Is Joseph Wise?") is a stimulating reminder of the "Solomonic Enlightenment" hypothesis of von Rad and ancient wisdom as a heuristic comparison with Proverbs (pp. 226–37). However, other particular themes in Genesis 37–50 (e.g. deceit, evil, nationalism, patriarchal faith) seem to be sacrificed for these larger canonical connections. How much theological grist really emerges from conceptual overlap? Obviously one's dating of the Genesis 37–50 material is crucial to this wisdom connection. Moberly's reminder that some events are "illustrative" rather than "stipulative" is appropriate—not all temptation comes in malicious form (Genesis 39, p. 235). I disagree, however, with his repeated description of "reconciliation" between the brothers, especially for Genesis 45 (pp. 3, 225, 237, 238, 242). This collapses (1) Joseph's attempt to incorporate the brothers into the divine work through forgiveness (Gen 45:5–7) with (2) their utter fright seventeen years later (Gen 50:15–21), when their fabricated story prompts yet another weeping from Joseph (50:17).

Aside from a few misspellings, this text and format is promising for the series. Moberly has written the most engaging theology of Genesis in years. He does not skimp on the connections between ancient text and contemporary context—textual to enacted theology. Undergraduate students could use this text if they have had an adequate foundation in core critical issues and biblical theology. Graduate programs in Genesis and biblical theology will be richly rewarded. Moberly is to be thanked.

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Nahum: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. By Duane L. Christensen. Anchor Yale Bible vol. 24F. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, xxxiv + 423 pp., n.p.

The latest offering in the Anchor Yale Bible series comes from Duane L. Christensen. The dust jacket informs readers that Christensen is professor of Old Testament Languages and Literature (retired), Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, and president of BIBAL Corporation, an acronym for The Berkeley Institute of Biblical Archaeology and Literature. He has written extensively on the book of Nahum in the past—the bibliography in this book lists at least ten of his published journal articles, Bible dic-

tionary entries, and essays on or related to the topic. Thus, he is well qualified to speak on this subject.

Initially, the author gives his own translation and logoprosodic analysis of the book of Nahum. Then, in an introduction to the book that covers nearly seventy pages, he addresses issues such as:

- "Logoprosodic Analysis and the Book of Nahum," a section that recounts the history of prosodic studies in Nahum and sets out his methodology of approach in analyzing the poetic nature of the text. Christensen defines his method as counting three distinct elements: (1) morae (singular mora), which he defines as a subdivision of a syllable. A syllable with a short vowel is one mora; a syllable with a long vowel is two morae; (2) SAS (syntactic accentual-stress) units, defined as groupings of words between two successive disjunctive accent marks; and (3) words, hence the term *logo*-prosodic (p. 12). This section concludes with a summary of the basic terminology used in the logoprosodic analysis, as well as an illustration of his method using Nahum 1:3. Christensen used a similar approach in his commentary on Deuteronomy (see *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9* [Word Biblical Commentary, 2d edition, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001], pp. lxxx–lxxxvii).
- "The Interpretation of Nahum in History," in which Christensen summarizes past approaches to Nahum beginning with the interpretation that saw Nahum as a midrashic reflection on Exodus 34:6–7. He then traces scholarly research and interpretation of Nahum down through the centuries to the present. Christensen expresses the hope that his commentary will contribute a different stance from which to view the end product of the editorial process in terms of authorial design in the numerical (and musical) composition of Nahum within the context of the Book of the Twelve Prophets as a whole (pp. 24–25).
- "Archaeomusicology and the Study of Nahum." Archaeomusicology is the discipline that specifically explores past music cultures through archaeological artifacts and texts. This discussion is foreshadowed by this quote: "Careful analysis of the poetry in Nahum reveals an elegant literary structure; the best way to explain its remarkable structural symmetry is to posit musical influence" (p. 23). If I understand correctly, Christensen is making the case that the text of Nahum is a finely crafted numerical piece (exhibited by the balance and symmetry of the syllable and word counts) based on ancient matrices of harmonics and the multiplicative products of certain numbers. Those who are not mathematically inclined will find the discussion in this section rather difficult to comprehend.
- "Reading Nahum as Literature," a section devoted to discussion of the stages of redaction of the text, as well as the literary genre and structure. Christensen states that there is no scholarly consensus on the book's literary genre or literary structure, and that he hopes his approach will contribute toward a better understanding of the literary structure. His thorough discussion of the literary structure is certainly worth considering.
- "The Historical Setting of Nahum and Nineveh," in which the history of Assyria is recounted.
- "The Text of Nahum," where Christensen affirms the faithful transmission of the text with few problems, a position that differs greatly from those who suggest numerous emendations in an attempt to adjust the so-called acrostic in 1:1–10.

Following the introduction is a bibliography that extends over eighty pages. Then Christensen begins the main section of the book called "Notes and Comments." Each poetic section of Nahum is treated as follows: (1) a chart giving the logoprosodic analysis

of the passage, including his translation of the text, counts of morae, SAS units, and words set up in three columns to the right of the translation; (2) a section of Notes, in which textual and grammatical issues are set out, along with a chart showing the balance of the SAS units, the designation of a verse as the "meaningful center" of that passage as indicated by the SAS units, then the strophic units of the passage are shown by the balance and symmetry of the morae count, and then the word count is listed; (3) an Introduction that discusses literary structure based on prosodic grounds; (4) another section entitled "Notes," in which a verse-by-verse discussion of the text is conducted, with an emphasis on clarifying the meanings of words and phrases; and (5) a section entitled "Comments," containing short essays that give explanatory background on matters that arise in the verse-by-verse treatment.

The book concludes with four indices that are quite extensive and include separate lists for Authors, Subjects, Biblical and Other Ancient Sources, and finally, Languages, by which is meant occurrences of Akkadian, Arabic, Aramaic, Canaanite, Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Moabite, Persian, Syriac, and Ugaritic terms found in the book.

The main contributions made by this study are the discussions of the history and current status of research regarding various scholarly issues associated with the book of Nahum, including the historical setting of the book, along with the history of interpretation, and the insightful discussions regarding the book's literary structure, not only in the introduction to the book but in the introductions of each poetic section as well. Those who are interested in logoprosodics will see an expert at work. The approach taken here follows much the same procedure as his two-volume commentary on Deuteronomy (2001–2002), and is an expression of a virtual lifelong interest in the study of logoprosodics in the book of Nahum that began with his doctoral dissertation (published in 1975) and finds its greatest expression in this book. Those who are not interested in counting syllables and words or exploring the intricacies of archaeomusicology may still benefit from his expertise in the commentary section.

One of the negatives of the book is the terminology of logoprosodics. If a reader lacks a firm grasp of these terms, it may be difficult to follow the point being made as issues of logoprosodics and archaeomusicology are discussed, since the analyses can be quite bewildering to one who is unfamiliar with the concepts and nomenclature. This book was written by a scholar and is aimed at fellow scholars. Others may benefit from reading the general introduction along with the "Notes" and "Comments" sections, but the target audience is the academy, and specifically those who are interested in logoprosodics and archaeomusicology. Christensen's purpose is to answer questions regarding Nahum's literary structure and demonstrate the unity of the Hebrew text through the counting of syllables and words, a pursuit that displays the balanced poetic/numerical structure of the book.

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The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity. By Stephanie Lynn Budin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, ix + 366 pp., $90.00.

Stephanie Budin wastes no time in announcing her bold thesis in the opening line of this important monograph: "Sacred prostitution never existed in the ancient Near East or Mediterranean." Just as quickly, she explains the study's basic organization in the second sentence: "This book presents the evidence that leads to that conclusion"—a conclusion that has become something of a trend in recent scholarship.

She then surveys several different definitions of sacred prostitution (or, in other words, "cult, cultic, ritual, or temple prostitution"), before settling on the following: "Sacred prostitution is the sale of a person's body for sexual purposes where some portion (if not all) of the money or goods received for this transaction belongs to the deity" (p. 3). In formulating her definition, Budin is guided by several parameters (pp. 3–4). She has: (1) "attempted to keep to the absolute basics, offering only the information provided by the Near Eastern and Classical 'sources,' while remaining cognizant that most of these 'sources' had nothing to do either with sacred prostitution or with each other" (*pace* her own insistence that many are dependent on Herodotus, pp. 94, 284); (2) "eschewed the secondary interpretations that have emerged in the definitions and studies over the centuries, such as fertility ritual or rite of defloration"; and (3) "insisted on the aspect of economic exchange, the *sine qua non* of prostitution."

On the surface, all of this seems unobjectionable. Yet the economic aspect is non-negotiable, and thus she draws a hard and fast line between sacred prostitution and "what might be termed sacred sex" (p. 4; cf. pp. 8, 17–18, esp. n. 19). This distinction seems to bias the entire discussion by establishing distinctions that appear intended to guarantee the predetermined outcome. That is, should one really put sacred prostitution into one category and sacred sex or "sacred marriage" (*heiros gamos*) into an entirely different one? Is the exchange of money one thing (i.e. sacred prostitution), while sex, as a means of religious expression or devotion to the deity (i.e. sacred sex), really another matter? With regard to these distinctions, then, one might profitably compare Karel van der Toorn's definition of sacred prostitution, in which he mutes the element of economic exchange and broadens the focus to "religiously legitimated intercourse with strangers in or in the vicinity of the sanctuary" (*ABD* 5:510). Despite this caveat, Budin launches her study in what is an excellent introductory chapter. However, the question of whether the evidence will sustain her thesis is another matter.

Chapters 2–10, then, predictably examine the evidence for sacred prostitution in antiquity—Budin's shorthand for the ancient Near East and Mediterranean (p. 5). Her approach is "mostly philological" (p. 4), since the interpretation of archaeological and artistic evidence "inevitably comes back to the literary sources" (p. 5; cf. p. 8). In the end, "the study of sacred prostitution . . . mainly boils down to a study of terminology" (p. 5). Again, this seems unobjectionable—assuming that she does not completely gut the value of archaeological and artistic evidence and provided that the terminology is read and interpreted *in context*. Unfortunately, immediate contexts often seem to be ignored and replaced with the chasing of cognates and the pursuit of parallels.

Chapter 2 is devoted to an examination of the implied references in the Near Eastern corpus. (The direct references in the classical corpus, whether Greek, Latin, and Christian texts, are analyzed in chapters 3–10.) The nomenclature "implied" and "direct" is important. With it, Budin refers to "the fact that many of the words identified as 'sacred prostitute' in the ancient Near Eastern languages are actually of uncertain definition" (p. 5). Greek and Latin sources, on the other hand, "use more clearly defined words," resulting in a "transparency of the vocabulary" (p. 5).

In chapter 2 on the implied references of the all-important Near Eastern corpus, Budin pursues her thesis by first examining the evidence from Mesopotamia (pp. 17–33) and then that from Israel and Canaan (pp. 33–47). Unfortunately, her interpretation of the evidence appears one-sided and focused on possible rather than probable readings (e.g. pp. 36, 40–42). That is, she seems intent on showing how various texts can be read so as to fit her thesis rather than on interacting with competing viewpoints in an attempt to determine the most-likely reading. Opposing views are either simply ignored or cavalierly dismissed (e.g. pp. 37–38, 42). Although it would be unfair to expect a full-blown exegetical discussion of all texts, there is a surprising paucity of references to standard commentaries and lexica when she comes, for example, to discuss

the relevant OT texts (she does briefly mention BDB, but *DCH*, *HALOT*, *TDOT*, and *TLOT*, for example, are neither cited nor even mentioned). Furthermore, when she does cite secondary sources, her use of these is troubling. For example, she cites (1) C. F. Keil's *Commentary on the Old Testament* as if it were a current authority published in 2001 rather than in 1866; (2) John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) as an authority on both the Septuagint's and Jerome's translation of the OT; and (3) Sir Lancelot Brenton's 1851 translation of the Septuagint as evidence that the LXX offers little help in sorting out the Hebrew text's lexical data. Also, she seems overly dependent on a rather limited number of scholars (e.g. Julia Assante, Stephen M. Hooks, and Joan G. Westenholz). Especially egregious is her exclusive dependence on Assante's idiosyncratic "new understanding" (p. 27) of the Akkadian *harimtu*, which allows Budin to avoid the devastating consequences to her thesis of a recently published text from Nuzi (SMN 1670)—a text that provides, in the assessment of John Day, among others, "incontrovertible evidence for temple prostitution" ("Does the OT Refer to Sacred Prostitution and Did It Actually Exist in Ancient Israel?" in *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays* [ed. Carmel McCarthy and John F. Healey; London: T & T Clark, 2004] 15). Now all this is not to argue that Budin's thesis is wrong. Rather, it is to suggest that her work, at this point, does not inspire confidence.

Her discussion of the OT (pp. 33–45) focuses primarily on the use of *qadesh* and *qedeshah* and "why did the notion of 'sacred prostitute' emerge" from these terms (p. 35). For Budin, there are three misguided reasons: (1) proximity of the terms with those for a prostitute (*zonah*) and male prostitute (*kaleb*, lit. "dog") in Deut 23:17–18 [MT: 18–19]; (2) the imagery of apostasy or spiritual "whoring" in Hos 4:14; and (3) a single literary narrative, Genesis 38. Her treatment of each of these texts is not convincing. Her analysis of Hosea is one-sided and fails to do justice to the combination of sexual and cultic imagery in the immediate context. The analysis of Deut 23:17–18 is particularly problematic, as it is fraught with speculation: "it *is possible* . . . is *not necessarily* . . . *may be* . . . *may be* . . . One *could argue*" [p. 36, italics mine]. Moreover, she does not engage the issue at hand, namely, the command not to bring "the fee of a prostitute [*zonah*] or the wages of a dog [*kaleb*] into the house of the Lord." Such a prohibition is a good sign of the existence of such a practice. Thus it seems that prostitution was being used to fund the temple and drive its economy. This was apparently sanctioned by the temple authorities—unless one assumes that the prohibition was only directed at prostitutes. Finally, the treatment of Genesis 38 is poorly documented and ignores the parallelism between *zonah* and *qedeshah* through an ingenious reading of verses 12–20 in which a "motif" contrasting "whoring and holiness" dominates the narrative (p. 40). In this case, a speculative reading of the wider context is used to override the more immediate context.

Budin's discussion of the OT is telling for another reason. Its emphasis is primarily lexical, focusing on key technical terms (this is also true of her analysis of the Mesopotamian evidence). She has neglected other important texts and contexts (e.g. Lev 19:29; 1 Kgs 14:24; 15:12; 22:46 [MT: 47]; 2 Kgs 23:7; Isa 57:7–8; Jer 2:20; 3:2; 5:7–8; Ezek 16:16, 24–25, 31; Mic 1:7). The potential significance of these is conveniently summarized by John Day, whose important study Budin has apparently failed to consider (Day, "Does the OT Refer to Sacred Prostitution?" 6–12).

Switching her gaze to the "direct references" of the Mediterranean evidence, Budin, in chapters 4–10, analyzes most of the major references that are alleged to refer to sacred prostitution (chap. 3 is an introductory overview to this collection of evidence): Herodotus (chap. 4); Lucian and the Epistle of Jeremiah (chap. 5); Pindar (chap. 6); Strabo (chap. 7); Klearkhos, Justinus, and Valerius Maximus (chap. 8), the archaeological evidence (chap. 9); and early Christian literature (chap. 10). From her analysis,

she suggests that only a total of seven texts coming from six different authors (Herodotus, Lucian, Strabo—two contributions, Justinus, Athanasius, and Augustine) actually refer to sacred prostitution, with the rest representing misreadings of the evidence that do not even refer to sacred prostitution. In the end, even these seven key texts do not indicate the presence of sacred prostitution. It is only a myth—the result of misunderstanding, confusion, or bad scholarship—either ancient or modern.

On the whole, Budin's treatment of this collection of evidence is not convincing. There are a number of concerns that cast doubt on her thesis: historical error (p. 166); false dichotomy (pp. 167–79); geographical confusion (p. 132 n. 49); illegitimate totality transfer (p. 175); excessive recourse to multivalent meanings (pp. 120–26); argument from silence (p. 190); special pleading (p. 125); unwarranted generalization (pp. 123–24); citation error (p. 215); ignoring evidence (pp. 182–83); and speculative exegesis (with regard to Herodotus, see the discussion following the catchphrases "how" and "what" on pp. 67 and 76).

Yet three issues occur repeatedly and are especially worrisome. First, the work exhibits a troubling lack of precision and rigor. Several examples underscore this point. (1) According to Budin, part of the "methodological mistake" that perpetuated the myth was that classicists resorted to what she considers an outdated work: J. B. Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (*ANET*). Yet, she (a) apparently confuses *ANET* with Pritchard's *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*; (b) cannot get the titles of either of these correct; and (c) does not herself cite the most recent edition of the definitive volume among these, *ANET*, which itself underwent correction and updating (for these foibles, see pp. 9 n. 15; 16 n. 10; 29 n. 90; 350). Perhaps this amounts to nitpicking, yet "methodological mistakes" such as these do not inspire confidence. (2) Budin makes the case for interdisciplinary work, in which there is the need for "studying the ancient world as whole" and for making sure that "East meets West" (p. 10). Yet, she promptly dismisses Edwin Yamauchi's study ("Cultic Prostitution: A Case Study in Cultural Diffusion," in *Orient and Occident* [ed. H. A. Hoffner, Jr.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1973]) since he is a classicist engaged in "discussions of the ancient Near Eastern evidence," which lies outside his field of expertise (p. 9). This is wrong on several fronts. First, Yamauchi is not a classicist; second, even if he were a classicist, dismissing his study for this reason alone is purely *ad hominem*; third, he was doing the very thing Budin is lobbying for—working across the range of materials from antiquity—both East and West; and fourth, he was eminently qualified to do so. (3) In discussing Pindar, frg. 122, *after* she notes that "the prostitutes flutter *in thought* to Aphrodite" (p. 122, emphasis mine; cf. p. 112 and LCL: "soaring in your thoughts to the heavenly mother of loves, Aphrodite") she insists at least four separate times that "the prostitutes themselves . . . flutter heavenward to Aphrodite" (pp. 122 *bis*, 125, 131) and thus "end up being the sacrificial victims" (p. 122), a sacrifice of "female flesh" (p. 123). Such miscues are not unimportant, for in this case (as the reference to human sacrifice makes clear), they contribute directly to what appears to be a strained—even fanciful—interpretation of Pindar (see esp. pp. 136–38).

Second, with little argumentation or evidence, Budin moves seamlessly from speculation to settled fact, from the possible ("might") to the probable ("thus"). Pages 225–27 provide a classic example (see also e.g. pp. 28, 159–63, 211, 244). She argues as follows: "Ironically, I *believe*, Justinus invented the Lokrian votum . . . Justinus *may have* . . . it *would seem* . . . *could* simply be . . . *could have* been . . . *may have* functioned . . . *if* we combine . . . we *might come up* with . . . *may have* read . . . with *some* kind . . . *somehow* resolved. . . . And *thus* the notion of the Lokrian votum emerged" (italics mine). Such a use of "could," "may," "might," etc., does not make for convincing argumentation or conclusions. In short, several "possibilities" added together become a more tenuous possibility, not a probability.

Third, early conclusions dictate how later evidence is read. Rather than allowing later evidence to qualify or inform earlier decisions, these conclusions become unassailable and controlling. They are seldom if ever preliminary, tentative, or subject to revision. There are numerous examples of this (see e.g. pp. 60, 66, 79, 96, 114, 165, 190), but her comments that her hypothesis itself is evidence in this investigation is particularly disturbing: "The above arguments, then, *combined with the overall hypothesis of this book* that none of the evidence for sacred prostitution in the ancient world is real, make, I believe a very strong case" (p. 103, emphasis mine).

Not all is negative. As a scholar, Budin shows vast learning, controlling a wide swath of ancient history and a breathtaking array of ancient and modern languages. Furthermore, her work collects, organizes, and discusses all (or nearly all) of the key evidence. In sum, she has produced an excellent resource, which few could have produced and to which subsequent scholars will turn to again and again.

Budin rounds out her study by clearly and concisely summarizing her study under the heading "Reconsidering the Evidence" (pp. 284–86) and by appending a final chapter (chap. 11), "Last Myths." This is a sort of history of interpretation, tracing the development of the "myth" in scholarship over the last two centuries. It nicely ties up some loose threads and likewise provides a fitting summary. It is perhaps her finest chapter.

Nevertheless, rather than conduct an unbiased, objective investigation, Budin appears to cut the evidence to fit a pre-existing mold, making her case—despite its triumphalism—hardly convincing. She eschews contextual readings to pursue parallels and chase cognates, apparently unaware that there is more to all this than simply looking for comparanda and the technical uses of some terms. Although there is much to be said in favor of Budin's thesis and in many ways I am inclined towards it, in the end, "the lady doth protest too much, methinks."

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Finding Meaning in the Text: Translation Technique and Theology in the Septuagint of Amos. By W. Edward Glenny. VTSup 126. Leiden: Brill, 2009, xiv + 306 pp., $154.00.

W. Edward Glenny, professor of New Testament and Greek at Northwestern College, St. Paul, MN, has provided a study of the translation technique and theology of the translator of LXX-Amos (cf. p. 1). The first part of chapter 1 is devoted to defining terms (e.g. translation technique, theology, or *Tendenz* et al.), presenting the presuppositions for the study of translation technique, and providing a survey and evaluation of the sources of the *Vorlage* (Qumran materials). In the second part of the chapter, he surveys past studies of LXX-Amos (Johnson, Arietti, De Waard, Dines, Park, and Gelston) and four important methodological influences on this present study (Dines, Van der Kooij, Baer, and Palmer). Perhaps, it is noteworthy that Glenny omits reference to the "interlinear" model of understanding the relationship between the LXX and its *Vorlage*, which was employed in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Regarding the basic methodological question of whether one should try to explain the differences between the LXX and MT on the level of translational and/or interpretive factors before assuming a different *Vorlage*, Glenny agrees with Emanuel Tov and John Wevers, who suggest positing a different *Vorlage* only when other reasonable explanations fail (p. 9). Likewise, Glenny seeks translational explanations in the absence of known textual variants supporting the different reading in the LXX (p. 10).

In chapters 2–4, Glenny describes the translation technique of LXX-Amos. In chapter 2, he asks whether LXX-Amos is a literal or free translation. He surveys the categories and the approaches of scholarship to the issue of "literalism" (pp. 32–44) and then turns to the evidence concerning literalism in LXX-Amos. He uses Tov's criteria in an unsystematic manner, since Tov's interest was in the LXX for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, while his "study is interested in the LXX for its own sake" (p. 44). Glenny observes the following traits of literalism in LXX-Amos: (1) the translator followed the word order of MT consciously (p. 45); (2) the translator attempted to have a formal equivalent for every element in his *Vorlage*, even if he did not slavishly follow his source (p. 51); (3) with respect to representation of constituent elements the translator was not constrained to represent the form of the word in the original in every case (p. 57); and (4) the translator employed variation or non-stereotyping on the lexical level as well as the level of the grammatical construction (e.g. the infinitive construct in formulaic phrases; p. 63). This chapter closes with a section on *Tendenz*, that is, places in LXX-Amos that do not have regular translation equivalents because the lexical choice may have been influenced by the exegetical reasoning of the translator (p. 63).

In chapter 3, Glenny examines the manner in which the translator handles difficult or unknown words. Using Tov's six categories of "conjectural renderings," he seeks to offer explanations for the anomalies in LXX-Amos. Glenny says, "Conjectural renderings are not renderings that according to our understanding of the texts involved are mistranslations, but rather renderings, which show the translator's ignorance of words through an analysis of the inner dynamics of the translation" (pp. 71–72). LXX-Amos uses the following techniques: (1) untranslated words, that is, words transliterated into Greek characters (p. 73); (2) contextual guesses, that is, instances where the translator used the context as a guide for his translation of a difficult Hebrew word or a word he did not completely understand (p. 77); (3) contextual manipulation, which means he would knowingly manipulate the Hebrew consonants to create words that fit the context better than the words found in the *Vorlage*, and this may happen because the translator did not understand the *Vorlage* or because it did not make sense to him in light of other changes or mistranslations in the context (p. 85); (4) reliance on parallelism, since at times it appears that the translator used an unusual equivalent or equivalents that are different in different contexts (p. 95); (5) employment of general words, even though the source requires a more specific term (p. 99); and (6) etymological renderings consisting of both "root-linked" renderings and etymological guesses (p. 100).

In chapter 4, Glenny treats the visually ambiguous phenomena in LXX-Amos under three categories: homonyms, homographs, and word division. Before turning to these matters, he wisely outlines several background issues that create ambiguities in the *Vorlage* of the translator including the matter of vocalization, *matres lectionis* and vowels in the Hebrew text, final letters, *scriptio continua* or word division, and the intention of the translator. Homonyms are words that are graphically and phonically identical but have quite different meanings. Glenny's examples consist of places where the rendering in LXX-Amos differs from the traditional understanding of MT (p. 125). Whether Glenny means the ancient tradition or the opinions of modern scholars at this juncture is not clear. Homographs are words that have the same consonantal text, but the consonants can be vocalized differently, resulting in different meanings. Glenny uses the traditional vocalization in MT as the point of comparison for LXX-Amos. Under homographs, he organizes his discussion according to the perceived causes for the difference in translation: translator's lack of understanding, immediate context, and wider context, which means the translator probably was aware of the different vocalizations, but he chose the rendering he did based on his theology and worldview (p. 137). Sometimes word division caused different translations to occur, usually due to the translator's lack of understanding (p. 141).

In chapters 5–8, Glenny moves to the theology of the translator, which depends upon the results of the first part of his study. According to Glenny, if the translator had biases or a theological agenda, they would surface in those places where the *Vorlage* is ambiguous or difficult to understand (p. 150). In chapter 5, Glenny observes an anti-Syrian and anti-Samaritan bias in LXX-Amos. Glenny does not depend on the translation alone, but he wisely refers to other Jewish works from the period in order to demonstrate that this negative bias did indeed exist (p. 156). He also finds evidence of anti-Baal polemic and Hellenistic religious influences. In chapter 6, Glenny treats the translator's view of God. Significantly, Glenny shows that the translator is not against the use of anthropomorphism or using other human characteristics to describe God. In chapter 7, he takes up the subjects of Gentiles, eschatology, and messianism, concluding, "There is no systematic development of the translator's theology. Instead the reader catches snippets of the translator's biases and the influences of his environment and culture in small and subtle differences between the *Vorlage* and the translation" (p. 240). In chapter 8, Glenny observes that LXX-Amos updates the message of Amos pertaining to geography and religion for his contemporary audience; this should not be described as "fulfillment" (p. 258–59). According to Glenny, the translator of LXX-Amos was a scholar-scribe, who translated the LXX-Minor Prophets in the mid-second century in Egypt (pp. 262–64). Therefore, Glenny's study helps confirm the scholarly consensus regarding these last issues.

There is much to commend in Glenny's work, especially his methodology in the first part of his study. He attempts to explain the differences between the LXX and the MT on the translational level and not on the basis of a different *Vorlage*, and in many places he has demonstrated this claim. Therefore the book is significant to OT textual critics as well as those who are interested in translation technique as a discipline in and of itself. Some scholars will question whether Glenny exhausts every *textual and linguistic* explanation in the immediate context in the first part of this study before moving to alternative explanations stemming from the translator's putative worldview or wider context in the second part. This same skepticism will hover over some as they read how Glenny moves from translation technique to glimpses of the translator's worldview. Yet Glenny has provided a valuable work in a time when LXX studies are flourishing, and this book is a welcomed contribution.

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Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period. By Michael F. Bird. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010, xvi + 208 pp., $24.95 paper.

Scholars who have not personally engaged in the study of early Jewish missionary activity may be surprised to find that it is a matter of intense debate. Based on Jesus' words in Matt 23:15 ("Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert" [NIV]) and an influential tradition of interpretation (e.g. Adolf von Harnack, Emil Schürer, Julius Wellhausen, etc.), many scholars assume that Second Temple Judaism was characterized by an aggressive attempt to convert Gentiles to Jewish belief and practice. In fact, within the last twenty-five years, this long-standing thesis has been largely overturned by the influential studies of Martin Goodman, Scot McKnight, and others. Though there are some detractors (e.g. Louis Feldman), the majority of scholars who delve into the question of early Jewish mission are in agreement that Second Temple Judaism lacked a self-conscious identity as a missionary religion and concomitant evangelistic expressions.

Michael F. Bird, while ultimately agreeing with the new dominant paradigm, contributes significantly to the ongoing discussion of early Jewish missionary activity through his engaging monograph, *Crossing Over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period*. As an outworking of research he originally began for his dissertation (*Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission* [LNTS 331; London: T & T Clark, 2006]) at the University of Queensland under Rick Strelan, Bird systematically and carefully considers the many debated questions that touch on the issue of whether early Jews were in any sense evangelistic, and if so, in what way. Bird undertakes this study not as a dispassionate observer but with a desire to know if early Jewish missionary activity provides an explanation for the missionary impulse of early Christianity. In brief, in concluding that early Judaism was not evangelistic, Bird suggests that one must look elsewhere for this missionary impulse—indeed, one must look to Jesus, the Messiah who inaugurates the eschatological era of salvation.

Chapter 1 of the book lays out a history of the debate over early Jewish mission, including key issues and influential scholars. In lucid prose, Bird deftly handles both secondary and primary sources. Chapter 1 concludes with an excursus on the meaning of “Jews” and “Judaism” within ancient literature (i.e. did the term “Jew” always connote devoted religious commitment to the God of the Hebrews?). Bird sets an example of careful linguistic work presented in a format accessible to the non-specialist—a pattern consistently repeated throughout the book.

Chapter 2 aims at defining the slippery terms of “mission” and “conversion.” What activity, in fact, should classify as mission—passive attraction, active engagement, approval of outsiders’ interest, philosophical apologetics? Also, what level of commitment must a previous outsider make to be considered a convert? Bird concludes that, for early Jews, genuine mission should be defined as “trying to convince Gentiles of monotheism, bringing the values and behavior of Gentiles into alignment with those of a Jewish community, and formally recognizing them as members of their own religious and social identity after the appropriate rituals and rites have taken place” (p. 43). For male Gentiles, circumcision was the “*sine qua non* of conversion to Judaism” (p. 43). Chapter 2 concludes with two excurses, one on God-fearers and the other considering “Proselytism and Demographics” (i.e. whether the growth of the Jewish population in the Second Temple period must be explained by recourse to Gentile conversions, to which Bird answers “no”).

In chapter 3, Bird considers “Jewish Missionary Activity in Palestine.” While noting the artificial distinction between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism, Bird divides the sources in this way because of the history of forced conversions, which are only found within the confines of the historic land of Israel. (I wonder if it might not be better simply to divide the material into compulsory and voluntary conversions.) Admittedly, during the Hasmonean struggle for independence and purity of the land, Jews did forcibly convert various groups, such as the Idumeans under John Hyrcanus I. These conversions, however, must be understood primarily as a means of purifying and defining the nation of Israel—not as activity motivated by a missionary impulse. In chapter 3, Bird also considers the aggressive denunciatory stance of the Qumran literature and the debated NT verse Matt 23:15. Offering several options on Matt 23:15, Bird seems to favor reading it as Pharisees trying to win other Jews to their particular brand of Judaism or possibly the attempt to convert fully a partial Gentile adherent who has already attached himself tangentially to the God of Israel. Thus, even if the convert spoken of in the text is a Gentile, the missionary activity is at most responding to one who has already taken steps to leave paganism. The Pharasaic mission is a confirmation into a certain brand of Judaism rather than centrifugal outreach.

In chapter 4, Bird discusses “Jewish Missionary Activity in the Diaspora.” In one of the most helpful portions of the book, he presents a careful synthesis of primary sources—listing eight reasons why Gentiles were attracted to Judaism (pp. 83–93).

Bird follows with an investigation of relevant data from Josephus, Philo, apologetic-propagandistic literature (e.g. *Sibylline Oracles*, *Epistle of Aristeas*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Tobit*, etc.), Greek and Latin literature (Horace, Seneca, Tacitus, etc.), and early inscriptions. Though there is certainly evidence for Gentile conversions, there is no evidence that Jews were systematically seeking converts in an organized fashion, concludes Bird. More likely, Jews were responding to and instructing persons attracted to their ancient faith, though some genuine missionary activity of a more "spasmodic" nature might also have occurred.

In chapter 5, "Evidence from the New Testament and Early Christian Literature," Bird adds significantly to the ongoing discussion of early Jewish missionary activity through his consideration of early Jewish Christian proselytizers (e.g. Paul's opponents in Galatia who were seeking the circumcision of the Gentiles) and the Colossian heresy (a Jewish mysticism, in Bird's opinion). In both cases, we find again Jews seeking to confirm fully partial adherents (from their perspective) rather than Jews in groundbreaking outreach to pagans.

Bird concludes the book in chapter 6 with a brief summary of his study and implications for understanding the impetus and nature of the early Christian mission. A unique and helpful feature of the book is a large appendix that includes many primary texts that touch on early Jewish mission. The texts are presented both in their original languages (Hebrew, Greek) and in English translations.

There is little to criticize in this book. One might quibble with some organizational elements (could not the extensive excursuses be more profitably incorporated into the chapters?), but Bird is spot-on in his nuanced linguistic and historical judgments. Indeed, this book might profitably serve as a supplementary text in a course focusing on either missiology or biblical backgrounds. The text models careful research that has relevance for both reading the NT and rightly understanding missions. Bird's book takes its deserved place in the line of missions-related studies by NT scholars such as Eckhard Schnabel and I. Howard Marshall—scholars who model careful historical study in the service of the academy and the church.

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A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus. Vol. 4: *Law and Love*. By John P. Meier. Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, xiii + 735 pp., $55.00.

Volume 4 of *A Marginal Jew* focuses on Jesus' teachings about the Law and his commandments regarding love. After discussing the nature of the Law, Meier devotes a chapter each to Jesus' teaching on divorce, oaths, Sabbath, purity laws, and love.

Meier argues that no ancient Jewish source outside the NT forbids divorce. Since Paul, Mark, and Q prohibit divorce, Meier concludes that Jesus' prohibition of divorce is authentic based on multiple attestation as well as discontinuity (dissimilarity). Meier further argues that Jesus' prohibition was absolute and that Matthew's exception clause was the result of the redactor, who watered Jesus' prohibition down due to embarrassment over the absolute nature of the prohibition. The prohibition, therefore, is also supported by the criterion of embarrassment.

According to Meier, it is nonsense to think that Jesus abrogated the Law; the problem is to understand how Jesus could affirm the Law as a whole while prohibiting divorce, which the Law allowed.

Next, Meier analyzes Jesus' teaching on oaths. After discussing the relevant Jewish sources, Meier concludes that no ancient Jewish group before or after Jesus prohibited oaths. Even in the NT, the validity of oath-taking is assumed in Paul's letters, Hebrews, and Revelation. Only in Matthew and James are oaths totally prohibited. Therefore, on the basis of multiple attestation and discontinuity, Meier concludes that the prohibition of oaths goes back to Jesus. Meier makes the point that when Jesus prohibited divorce, he was prohibiting something the Law made optional but when Jesus prohibited oath-taking, he was prohibiting a practice that the Law sometimes actually commanded.

Regarding Sabbath, Meier demonstrates that outside of the Gospels no ancient Jewish source prior to the Mishnah prohibits healing on the Sabbath. Although Meier admits that disputes over Jesus' Sabbath healings are attested in multiple sources, he dismisses this attestation after further "critical analysis." Meier is convinced that none of the controversies surrounding Jesus' healing on the Sabbath go back to Jesus.

The chapter on Jesus and purity laws focuses almost entirely on Mark 7:1–23 in which Jesus declares all foods clean. Meier writes about the complex and artificial structure of Mark 7:1–23 and says it is the historian's task to dismantle the "artificial framework" and sift through the individual units to determine how much goes back to the historical Jesus. After extensive analysis, Meier concludes that, contrary to Mark, Jesus did not abrogate dietary laws.

Finally, Meier discusses Jesus' teaching on love. The paradox, says Meier, is that although Jesus' command to love is attested in multiple sources, no single command is so attested. Meier argues that the command to love God and love one's neighbor found in Mark 12:28–34 is supported by the criterion of discontinuity. Although similar commands are found in both Judaism and in the early church, Meier argues that the criterion of discontinuity applies anyway because no other source links Deut 6:4–5 and Lev 19:18b back to back, calling them "first" and "second" the way Jesus does. Meier therefore, judges the command to be authentic. Meier argues that the command to love one's enemies (Matt 5:44b//Luke 6:27b) is authentic based on the criterion of discontinuity, because, even though there are negative commands against retaliation and positive commands in favor of benevolence in ancient Jewish and Christian literature, there are no specific commands to love one's enemies outside of Q. On the other hand, Meier argues that the Golden Rule does not go back to Jesus, because the ideas stated in the Golden Rule are found both in ancient Jewish literature before Jesus and in both Christian and Jewish literature after Jesus; this even though the exact way Jesus formulates the Golden Rule is unique to him. In other words, although the ideas stated in the command to love one's enemies and in the Golden Rule are found both before and after Jesus (though neither is found in the exact form as stated by Jesus), Meier judges the criterion of discontinuity to apply to one but not to the other. Finally, the love commands in the Johannine tradition are judged to be inauthentic and unhistorical creations of the author or redactor of John's Gospel.

According to Meier, the historical Jesus was a thoroughly Jewish, charismatic prophet who argued with the halakic opinions of other Jewish groups. He claimed to get his authority from God and presented himself to Israel as an "Elijah-like prophet of the end time," which may explain why he presumed to have authority to overturn some aspects of the Law.

Meier, of course, is a giant in historical Jesus studies. The depth and meticulous nature of his historical research causes him to stand head and shoulders over nearly everyone else in the field. Nevertheless, his work is not without problems.

First, in *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), Dale Allison comments that liberals such as the members of the Jesus Seminar and conservatives such as Craig Blomberg both appeal to historical criteria to support their case for Jesus. In this book, Allison says, "Because our criteria are not strong

enough to resist our wills, we almost inevitably make them do what we want them to do" (p. 58). It seems to me that Meier has not escaped this trap. See, for example, the discussion on the Golden Rule and the command to love one's enemies above.

Another example can be found in Meier's discussion of purity laws. Meier concedes that the criteria of discontinuity and coherence argue for the authenticity of Mark 7:15, but he argues that it is just not credible that Jesus would have annulled the dietary laws, because this would have meant tearing down one of the Jewish boundary markers. Allison's point seems to be confirmed when what does or does not seem credible to the historian can override two of the historian's own primary criteria.

Similarly, Meier says that the idea that Jesus attacked or annulled the Sabbath "is too ludicrous to be taken seriously." Meier therefore finds reasons to deny that any of the Jesus' Sabbath controversies are historical even though they are supported by multiple independent attestation, one of Meier's own primary historical criteria. Some of the arguments Meier uses to overturn multiple attestation of Sabbath controversies seem strained at best. For example, with regard to plucking grain on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28), Meier follows E. P. Sanders who argues against historicity, asking whether we are to imagine groups of Pharisees patrolling grain fields on the Sabbath. The answer is, "of course not," but it is not hard to imagine a couple of Pharisees walking by a grain field after a synagogue service and encountering Jesus and his disciples on the edge of the field after having come from the same synagogue service! Mark's story is not strange. It is only Sanders's and Meier's caricature of the story that is strange. Other examples could be given and, of course, not all of Meier's objections can be dismissed so easily, but the point is that what passes for scholarly analysis is often not nearly as objective as it may at first appear.

Second, Meier argues that the researcher's task is to "undo what the evangelists did" by retrieving the "small original units of sayings that have been secondarily joined together." In reference to the "complex and artificial structure" of Mark 7:1–23, Meier says that it is the historian's assignment to dismantle the "artificial framework" and to sift through the individual units to determine how much goes back to the historical Jesus. Yet, as Richard Horsley pointed out in his *Jesus and Empire* ([Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003] pp. 56–58), if a book on Martin Luther King Jr. were written based solely on isolated sayings taken out of their social and literary context, we would not have an adequate understanding of the great civil rights leader nor would we know why he was important.

At a time when the assumptions of the form critics are increasingly being seen as anachronistic projections of a post-Gutenberg world back into the oral culture of the first century (cf., e.g., James D. G. Dunn in *Jesus Remembered* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003] or Paul Eddy and Gregory Boyd in *The Jesus Legend* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007]), the extent of Meier's indebtedness to these outdated form-critical assumptions comes out clearly in volume 4. It seems to me that if even half of the recent arguments against the old form-critical assumptions are correct, Meier's meticulous analysis of "small original units of sayings" may ultimately turn out to be a magnificent structure teetering on a foundation of sand.

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Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. By Joel Marcus. AB 27. New York: Doubleday, 2000, xix + 569 pp., $42.50; *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* By Joel Marcus. Anchor Yale Bible 27a. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009, lx + 573–1182 pp., $55.00.

The long-awaited completion of the Marcus commentary on Mark has been well worth the wait. It provides the serious student of Mark one of the best commentaries available for the study of this Gospel. Although for some the length of the two-volume work may be more than they want, the commentary provides a comprehensive, clear, and well-argued discussion of the key issues involved in the study of Mark. Marcus brings to this study a mastery of the relevant primary and secondary literature. A brief look at the "Index of Scripture" reveals this immediately. There are eleven pages (four columns per page in small type) of Scripture references, and the "Index of Other Ancient Sources" consists of twelve pages of references (also four columns per page in small type) of the pseudepigrapha (the apocrypha are listed at the end of the OT references), Josephus and Philo, Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic and other ancient Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish literature (Mishnah, Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, Midrashic literature, Targums, and miscellaneous), non-canonical Christian literature, other literature (primarily Roman), and papyri that are cited in the commentary. The most important of the cited references are quoted for readers, the majority of whom lack easy access to them. This is a helpful and user-friendly feature of the commentary that its large size makes possible.

The format of each volume is similar. Each begins with a separate preface, a list of features (charts, lists, comparisons, etc., 52 in all), and a list of principal abbreviations. This is followed by a forty-nine-page bibliography in volume 1 and a more compressed (smaller print and spacing) forty-page bibliography of works cited in the second volume. The author's translation of 1:1–8:21 in the first volume precedes a discussion of introductory issues, and his translation of 8:22–16:8 precedes the discussion of the commentary proper in the second. At the end of the commentary in each volume there is a list of appendices (four in the first volume and ten in the second), a glossary, and various indices. The introduction includes discussions concerning: author ("Markan authorship is not proven"); Papias' testimony; setting: the Markan community (a Syrian provenance); date (69 to 74 or 75 but probably shortly after the flight of the community from Jerusalem in 67–68); Gospel relationships (Markan priority); Secret Gospel of Mark (a fraud or if it existed probably a redaction of canonical Mark); Q (probably not known by Mark); Gospel of Thomas (the Gospel of Thomas's awareness of Gospel traditions dependent on knowledge of oral traditions not written Gospels); Markan composition (perhaps composed as a dramatization); the place of Mark in Christian thought (not a "correction Christology" but an attempt to encourage a persecuted church by such material as found in 4:35–41 and 6:45–52); and approach to the commentary (not an attempted "life of Christ" but an effort to explain how Mark's readers would have applied what the evangelist said to their specific situation).

The commentary proper consists of eight sections: 1:1–15 (Preface); 1:16–3:6 (First Major Section); 3:7–6:6a (Second Major Section); 6:6b–8:21 (Third Major Section); 8:22–10:52 (Fourth Major Section); 11:1–13:37 (Fifth Major Section); 14:1–15:47 (Sixth Major Section); 16:1–8 (Epilogue along with "A Postscript: The Markan Ending" that follows, in which Marcus argues that 16:8 is probably the original and intended ending of the Gospel). Each section begins with a general introduction to the section. Each subsection contains: a "Translation"—the author's "fairly literal" rendering of the Markan passage under discussion; "Notes" that explain choices make in the translation; and "Comment" which is "the heart of the commentary" where Marcus presents his "vision of what each

pericope is centrally about" (p. 81) by seeking to describe how the original readers (and hearers) would have responded to the text. The commentary is attractively formatted and printed by the publishers and carefully edited.

In various places throughout his commentary, Marcus makes clear that it is "not a reconstruction of the thought of the historical Jesus" (p. 866) or his life, but "a commentary on Mark." Thus he seeks "to know how Mark has incorporated and shaped the material at his disposal, whatever its source" (p. 866). Thus the commentary is rightly "a commentary on Mark," not "a life of Christ based on the Gospel of Mark." His particular aim is to explain how Mark's original readers would have understood his Gospel and responded to it. I agree with Marcus's goal of seeking how Mark's original audience should have understood his Gospel. The only access we have to Mark's written intention in writing his Gospel is by understanding how his intended readers should have understood the meaning that the evangelist encapsulated in his words. (Whereas Marcus uses "would have understood," I believe that "should have understood" is a better wording, because at times the biblical authors were misunderstood by their readers. This is in part why Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians!)

How Mark's readers would have responded to his Gospel, however, is much more elusive and is based on several additional and questionable hypotheses. It assumes that we can know with reasonable certainty who the actual readers/hearers of his Gospel were and their circumstances. (Literary critics by their use of such terms as actual readers, ideal readers, implied readers, real readers, etc., raise questions as to this very possibility.) Marcus bases his "Comment(s)" concerning the Markan text on the assumption that the readers of the Gospel were a predominantly Gentile–Christian community located in Syria (p. 36) containing Judean Christians who, according to Eusebius, *Church History* 3.5.3, fled from Judea to Pella in Perea (p. 896) in AD 67–68 due to an oral tradition that warned them to flee when the abomination of desolation appeared. (This is the warning later recorded by Mark in 13:14–15.) It is unclear, however, as to exactly how these Judean Christians (presumably Jewish) who fled to Pella shortly made their way to Syria and became part of a predominately Greek-speaking Gentile church (p. 39), as the language of the Gospel (Greek), explanation of Jewish customs (cf. 7:3–4), and interpretation of Aramaic phrases suggest. This is especially difficult to understand if the Gospel was written shortly after the flight of the community from Jerusalem in AD 67–68. Elsewhere Marcus speaks of the Markan community as having experienced "the Jewish war, the associated persecution of Christians, the flight from Judaea, and tribulation as has never before existed" (p. 917). This, however, was certainly not true of the majority of the Gentile-Christian church in Syria.

A second problem I have is the extensive "mirror reading" found throughout the commentary. Examples include among others: (1) 13:9–11 reflects "contemporary events of special relevance for the Markan Community" (p. 884), but these precede the abomination of desolation, which is a past event for the community; (2) the warning to flee upon seeing the abomination of desolation in 13:14–15 is seen as reflecting the experience of Mark's readers (p. 36) but the same warning appears in Matt 24:15–25 and Luke 21:20–24 and clearly does not reflect their readers' experience; (3) the statement in 13:23, "You then, look out. See, I have foretold all things to you," is interpreted as addressed to the Markan readers and meaning "Look, I foretold all the things *that have now come upon you*" (p. 903; emphasis Marcus's), but Matt 24:25 has essentially the same warning and does not permit such a mirror reading; (4) 13:14–23 describes tribulations that the Markan community is presently experiencing after their flight from Jerusalem (p. 917) but Epiphanius, who along with Eusebius refers to the flight to Pella, states that this flight enabled the church to live their lives in safety in Pella (*Panarion* 29.7.7–8)!

These criticisms aside, I believe that any serious student of the Gospel of Mark should possess this commentary. It is interesting to note that the last two decades have

brought a wealth of major English commentaries of Mark on the scene. These include those of R. A. Guelich (1989); R. H. Gundry (1993); C. A. Evans (2001); B. Witherington III (2001); J. R. Donahue and D. J. Harrington (2002); J. R. Edwards (2002); R. T. France (2002): A. Y. Collins (2007); R. H. Stein (2008), to which can be added the commentaries of D. H. Juel (1990); J. A. Brooks (1991); M. D. Hooker (1991); J. Painter (1997); M. J. Moloney (2002); etc. After an arid period of some three decades, a fertile period of new Markan commentaries has emerged. Now Marcus's commentary on Mark has appeared, which completes the Anchor Bible commentaries on the Gospels and is on a par with the superb two-volume commentaries on Luke by J. A. Fitzmyer and on John by R. E. Brown. Its replacement of the C. S. Mann commentary on Mark in this series is a convincing demonstration that the theory of Markan priority provides a much better basis for interpreting the Gospel of Mark than Mann's assumption of Matthean priority.

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John and Thomas—Gospels in Conflict? Johannine Characterization and the Thomas Question. By Christopher W. Skinner. Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009, xxii + 248 pp., $30.00 paper.

This is a revised version of a doctoral dissertation completed at the Catholic University of America under the supervision of Francis Moloney. Christopher W. Skinner sets out to test the hypothesis that the Fourth Gospel was written as a polemical response to the *Gospel of Thomas* or the materials lying behind it. Because this "community-conflict hypothesis" depends to a significant degree upon its advocates' analyses of John's portrayal of Thomas, Skinner seeks to evaluate it by examining the Fourth Gospel's wider patterns of characterization.

Skinner begins by surveying scholarly views on the relationship between *Thomas* and the Gospel of John, focusing particularly on three leading proponents of the community-conflict hypothesis, Gregory Riley, April DeConick, and Elaine Pagels. Each of these writers sees the theological conflict between John and *Thomas* somewhat differently, but they agree that the Fourth Gospel engages the theology of *Thomas* polemically and that this is most evident in John's depiction of the disciple Thomas. While acknowledging that additional factors also contribute to these scholars' arguments concerning the relationship between *Thomas* and the Fourth Gospel, Skinner judges their assessments of John's portrait of Thomas to constitute their most important piece of evidence. "In the end," he says, "the case for a John-*Thomas* conflict cannot be made apart from each scholar's view on the role of the Thomas character in the Fourth Gospel" (p. 17).

Skinner next discusses various aspects of his approach to narrative criticism and the analysis of Johannine characters (chap. 2). He seeks to combine narrative-critical sensitivity to the literary qualities of the Gospel with appreciation of the text's historical setting and function. With respect to the role of readers, he wishes to allow space for "the significant interchange that occurs between what the text presents to the reader and what the reader brings to the text" (p. 21)—though this latter concept is not discussed in depth and the modern reader's contribution to the meaning of the text does not appear to play a major role in the ensuing exegetical portions of the book. He sees Johannine characters falling along a spectrum ranging from agents to types to full-blown characters. He thinks the popular view that John's characters function as representative figures symbolizing particular historical groups or spiritual attitudes runs the danger of categorizing characters too narrowly and may lead interpreters to ascribe reductively

one dominant trait to each character. Skinner's discussion of the role of the Fourth Gospel's prologue in shaping the evangelist's presentation of characters is of special interest. He argues that the Gospel's implied reader will evaluate characters in terms of their response to Jesus as he is presented in the prologue: "characters appear as comprehending or uncomprehending to the degree that they grasp these themes from the prologue" (p. 40).

The next four chapters are then devoted to examining John's portrayal of a number of characters who misunderstand Jesus: first Thomas, then Peter, then other disciples, and finally certain non-disciples. Skinner traces the characterization of Thomas through his comment in 11:16 about going to "die with him" (seen as a deliberately ambiguous formulation, referring either to dying with Lazarus or dying with Jesus), his statement and question in 14:5 about not knowing the way where Jesus is going, and finally his demand for physical sight before believing Jesus has risen (20:24–29). Skinner concludes that Thomas is indeed presented as a negative, uncomprehending, and unbelieving figure. To this extent he agrees with the analyses of Riley, DeConick, and Pagels. He also points out, however, that Thomas does not receive the kind of extensive or distinctive attention within John's overall narrative that the community-conflict hypothesis would seem to demand. This sets the stage for Skinner's analysis of other characters who also misunderstand Jesus.

In analyzing John's portrayal of Peter, Skinner sees initial positive scenes (1:40–42; 6:60–71) giving way to more negative episodes (13:1–38; 18:1–27), followed by a return to positive portrayal (20:1–10; 21:1–23). Peter appears as a more developed and rounded character than Thomas, but he shares his status both as an uncomprehending disciple and as one who "undergoes a transforming experience from confusion and denial to faith" (p. 138). Skinner's investigation of Andrew, Philip, Judas (not Iscariot), and the disciples as a group reveals that they too display incomprehension. He concludes that the disciples' "inability to understand Jesus in categories that would be regarded as authentic by the implied reader" is their most distinctive trait in the Fourth Gospel (p. 163). With their questions and misunderstandings the disciples typically function as foils, allowing Jesus to clarify the truth about himself. Similar patterns of incomprehension mark the non-disciple characters Skinner surveys: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the sisters Martha and Mary.

A final chapter draws the threads of the argument together. Skinner concludes that the kind of misunderstanding and inadequate response to Jesus displayed by Thomas is part of a larger pattern within the Fourth Gospel. John's portraits of uncomprehending disciples or would-be disciples are not designed to serve a polemical purpose, but function instead to "provide the Johannine Jesus an opportunity to clarify some element of his identity or mission" (p. 228).

Skinner's attempt to refute one of the main pillars of the community-conflict hypothesis must be judged a success. His argument is straightforward, and the evidence he presents is strong. As an uncomprehending figure, Thomas is simply one among a much larger company of Johannine characters. I would also judge Skinner's effort to combine narrative-critical analysis of characters with historically and theologically oriented exegesis to be correct in principle. Certain aspects of his implementation of this project do call for a closer look, however. I will mention three. First, his decision to treat the Fourth Gospel's prologue as theological yardstick given to readers to enable them to measure the characters that appear throughout the rest of the Gospel seems open to question. Does the evangelist really want us to judge characters in time-of-Jesus scenes according to their perception of theological standards to which they had no access? At several points in Skinner's survey of characters, this factor results in a more negative assessment of a figure than the narrative signals offered within the immediate episode would warrant. For example, despite their positive statements

about Jesus as the Messiah and the one about whom Moses wrote, Andrew and Philip are viewed as uncomprehending characters because these categories fall short of the Christology of the prologue (pp. 143–47).

A second and related issue concerns the extent to which Johannine theological ideals should influence our reading of the Gospel's narrative details. At times, Skinner focuses heavily on themes such as faith or Jesus as the resurrection, and analyzes characters primarily in relation to these theological categories. The danger here is that too much may be read into some narrative details while, at the same time, clues pointing to other, less theologically-oriented character traits may be overlooked. Skinner's reading of Thomas's statement in 11:16 is a case in point. He finds Thomas at fault for not perceiving that Jesus' trip to Judea will be characterized by resurrection, but neglects the element of Thomas's implied loyalty (pp. 54–55). In a similar vein, when commenting of the chief priests and Pharisees' remarks about Galilee (7:52), Skinner focuses on Nicodemus's failure to correct their faulty Christological assumption that the Messiah would be a merely human figure from Galilee, but he gives less attention to the way in which their remarks call attention to the price Nicodemus is paying for speaking up for Jesus (p. 186). John's portrayals of characters undoubtedly serve theological ends, but these portraits must first be allowed to speak on their own terms.

Finally, although Skinner's narrative exegesis is generally judicious, a few of his readings are surprising and need to be better supported to be convincing. Here I would include his reading of the clause "secretly for fear of the Jews" in 19:38, which he connects to Joseph of Arimathea's act of going to Pilate rather than to his discipleship (p. 188), and his interpretation of Jesus' distress in 11:33 as anger over Mary's lack of faith (p. 219).

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Paul, His Letters, and Acts. By Thomas E. Phillips. Library of Pauline Studies. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009, xi + 243 pp., $24.95 paper.

Phillips sets off to "explore those brackish waters where the Paul of Acts meets the Paul of the letters" (p. 1). The book's "central project" is twofold. First, it investigates "the lines of demarcation between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters." Second, it compares "the 'Paul' on each side of these lines of demarcation" (pp. 2, 190). The "guiding question" of the entire volume centers upon whether "the smaller data set" gathered from Paul's letters can be placed within "the typically larger data set" gleaned from Acts (p. 148).

Phillips begins by summarizing the "Paul" of *Rabbi Paul*, by Bruce Chilton (New York: Doubleday, 2004), and the "Paul" of *In Search of Paul*, by John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed (New York: Harper Collins, 2004). The study then places these two "Pauls" in "imaginary dialogue" with one another (p. 26). Phillips concludes that the root of such divergent reconstructions concerns "the role that the book of Acts will play as evidence" (p. 27). Chilton "leans toward Acts" when facing a historical or exegetical judgment, while Crossan and Reed "lean away from Acts" (pp. 27–28). Although Phillips hints at engaging later in "direct discourse with one or the other of these Pauls" (p. 26), he does not return to assess them directly in light of his own conclusions or critical reflections.

Chapter 2 traces the split between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters as found in F. C. Baur, John Knox, and Philipp Vielhauer. After this *Forschungsbericht*,

Phillips summarizes the "recurring problems" faced by Pauline scholarship, including the diverse evidence found in Acts and the letters, the occasional nature of the letters, the limited scope of the extant materials, and the distinctive agendas of Acts and the epistles. In spite of such obstacles, Phillips commits himself to the presentation of a "disciplined" comparison between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters—with such fervor, in fact, that the word "disciplined" appears six times in the space of three pages (pp. 47–49). The book's "cautious" methodology includes "independent inquiry into Acts and the letters," "the intentional separation of Paul's life and thought," a "conscious focus upon the smaller data sets," and "a disciplined comparison moving from the lesser data sets to the greater data sets" (pp. 47–49, 83).

Every subsequent chapter is structured in the same manner. Phillips begins by examining the data set from the "undisputed" Pauline letters, then he analyzes the data set from Acts, and finally he compares and contrasts the two data sets. Chapter 3 covers biographical and chronological details of Paul's "life"; chapter 4 investigates Paul's social location in the Greco-Roman world; chapter 5 studies the Jerusalem Conference; and chapter 6 examines Paul's co-workers and associates. Phillips concludes that Acts and the epistles provide "distinct and somewhat incongruous" pictures of Paul (p. 197), although he predicts that "many equally skilled and perceptive readers" will come to "very different conclusions" (p. 190). Nevertheless, his diligent laying out of the data remains highly useful for the whole spectrum of interpreters, who are free to draw their own assessments.

The book is filled with cautious language, so that a single page may be replete with nuanced qualifications such as: "it seems safe to infer," "seems," "appears," "considerations strongly suggest," "even more likely," and "apparently" (p. 53). The author leaves open such issues as the provenance of Philippians, the integrity of Philippians, and the unity of 2 Corinthians (pp. 53, 54, 55). He proposes a date of composition that places Acts in the late first century or early second century (p. 197). Moreover, he tips his hat toward the presence of "historical embellishments" in Acts (p. 114 n. 124). "In particular, Paul's wealth, citizenships, tutelage under Gamaliel, and commissioning by the high priest—as well as the retainer class social status that Paul probably derived from these advantages—have probably (but not necessarily) been embellished to varying degrees by the author of Acts" (p. 124).

In Phillips's view, the "true epicenter" of Pauline reconstructions concerns "how the two Jerusalem visits in Galatians relate to the first four Jerusalem visits in Acts" (pp. 74, 80, 191). Although the volume recognizes a relative plausibility in the theory that places the composition of Galatians prior to the Jerusalem conference (p. 77), it eventually endorses a view that parallels the second Jerusalem visit in Galatians 1–2 with the Jerusalem conference (pp. 80–82, 191). Phillips clarifies that he "mildly" endorses this position, while he acknowledges that not all NT scholars concur (p. 191). The exact date and audience of Galatians are notoriously problematic, of course, and Phillips only reaches his conclusion through "hesitation and self-distrust" (p. 74). His view does relieve some tensions (p. 150 n. 57) but also leads to an "awkward fit" with other facts (p. 186).

Paul, His Letters, and Acts is a fascinating illustration of how one's beginning stance affects one's final stand. Phillips himself recognizes the influence of "presuppositions," "preconceptions," and socio-historical location (pp. 51, 193). He notes how F. C. Baur's reconstructions were influenced by the regnant Hegelian philosophy and anti-Jewish bias of his day (p. 33, 36). The volume also notes the "sobering impact" of the Holocaust on twentieth-century scholarship (p. 87). More recently, "potent political and theological trends" have prompted "significant revisions to earlier understandings of Paul's political orientation and status" (p. 97). Thus scholars entrenched in "Paul and

empire" studies inevitably draw parallels between contemporary American hegemony and ancient Roman imperialism (pp. 98–99). Moreover, conservative scholars are guided by their own presuppositions, such as "theological concerns for the unity of the canon" (p. 194 n. 9).

In his conclusion, Phillips claims, "I avoided, as much as possible, offering or consciously relying upon large theoretical constructs for orientation" (p. 191). He does, however, play by various "consensus" rules assumed by critical scholarship (as seen above). Phillips notes how Chilton, Crossan, and Reed shelved the "disputed" Pauline epistles by simply accepting their pseudonymity (p. 19, 19 n. 85). Therefore, the "Paul" found in Crossan/Reed and the "Paul" found in Chilton "are crafted from the same raw materials: the seven undisputed letters of Paul and a critical appropriation of Acts" (p. 27). Phillips deliberately chooses to build his own study upon these "same raw materials." He asserts that "the authorship of the disputed letters of Paul" and "their relationship to the historical Paul" are "beyond the scope of this volume" (p. 28 n. 130; cf. p. 29 n. 131).

The book's conclusion recognizes that "the contemporary practice of separating the disputed Pauline letters" from the historical investigation "no doubt heightens the disparity between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the (undisputed) letters" (p. 193 n. 6). As a result, Phillips ultimately sides with the "contemporary scholarly consensus" that "the author of Acts wrote his book in large measure to rehabilitate the Paul of the letters," whose "image" had been damaged through "social embarrassment" (pp. 196–97). Therefore, although the opening chapter set aside the "disputed" letters as "beyond the scope" of the study, their very absence shapes the final product, as acknowledged in the conclusion.

Let me provide two, small examples of how materials "disputed" by modern scholarship might influence the investigation. First, Phillips seems to assume that the arrangement of personal names in texts naturally implies a prioritizing of the individuals' functional roles (pp. 140, 161, 173–74, 181). Second, Phillips concludes that Silas was Timothy's primary mentor, and the two eventually broke from Paul over his law-free inclusion of Gentiles in the church (pp. 171, 175, 178, 185). On these two fronts, the "disputed" Pauline letters of Colossians and 2 Thessalonians provide relevant data. First, one notes how the placement of personal names in Col 4:10, 14 differs from Phlm 24, but without implying divergent orderings of functional importance. Second, "Paul and Silas and Timothy" are listed as the co-senders of 2 Thessalonians, without any hint of relational tension (2 Thess 1:1). In sum, Phillips carefully lays out data sets for a scholarly reconstruction of Paul, yet his "disciplined" methodology has been chastened by perspectives adopted from a "scholarly consensus" that ultimately influence the outcomes.

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Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship. By Magnus Zetterholm. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009, xv + 270 pp., $20.00 paper.

Arguably the single most important development in Pauline studies over the last three decades or so, as well as the catalyst for new work in a range of related disciplines, is the renewed focus on the relationship of Paul to his Jewish heritage. In this introductory work designed for theological students, Magnus Zetterholm relates the story

of the development and destruction of a well-established paradigm and the scholarly projects that ensued in the aftermath. Zetterholm is a NT scholar at Lund University in Sweden and writes as an outsider to orthodox Christian faith. He makes clear in his preface that he writes as a secular scholar with no affiliation to any religious community or tradition (p. x). In his view, this allows him to approach Paul and the quite polarized set of recent debates dispassionately. Zetterholm aims to understand Paul and his thought in terms of his Jewish heritage and also to come to grips with the historical developments that set Paul in opposition to his Jewish heritage. In many ways, this is the larger historical picture needed to understand the debates and discussions of the last thirty-five years with regard to Paul and what has come to be called the "new perspective on Paul."

In his opening chapter, Zetterholm notes that a responsible recovery of the historical Paul depends on more than merely the historical documents (p. 4). The portrait of the apostle and his relationship to his Jewish heritage that held sway before the Reformation and certainly since that era derived from a particular angle of approach just as much as from Luke's depiction and Paul's letters. The hermeneutical issues, therefore, immediately come to the fore. Zetterholm contends that Paul's letters and Luke's portrait of him in Acts have been read from a particular angle that sets Paul over against his heritage, and that is not necessarily an objective nor even a fair reading of the NT (pp. 4–13). Zetterholm develops a narrative of Paul's life in the rest of this chapter, one that begins with Paul's identity as a Pharisee and sees the remainder of his life in continuity with—not in contrast to—this identity.

In his second and third chapters, Zetterholm chronicles the rise of the modern view whereby Paul was set in contrast to his Jewish heritage, jettisoning Judaism with his embrace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He traces this perspective back to F. C. Baur, a main figure in the Tübingen School of the mid-nineteenth century. Hegelian ideology dominated Tübingen during this time, shaping the major proposals that were generated. Baur posited a conflict model for the development of early Christianity. For Baur, there was a basic antagonism between a "Pauline, universal type of Christianity, for which the Torah had had its day, and a Jewish-oriented, particularistic type of Christianity, still bound by the Torah" (p. 38). This basic conflict shaped Baur's entire outlook on the development of early Christianity, and it developed into a deep conflict between Judaism and Christianity. He eventually came to see Judaism as an inferior religion that needed to be abandoned once the "ideal religion," Christianity, came on the scene (p. 40). The development of Baur's thesis, according to Zetterholm, lent scientific credence to the classic Lutheran vision of Paul.

This vision of Paul against Judaism became the standard view among German biblical scholars and proved highly influential throughout the rest of the world, too. Zetterholm traces this notion through Bultmann, Käsemann, and Bornkamm. A few notable exceptions were the protests of Montefiore, Schechter, and Moore, though their work did little to turn scholars away from what had become an accepted way of reading Paul in relation to his heritage. To this point, the history traced by Zetterholm ought to prove enlightening for many who have assumed that to read Paul as rejecting Judaism was the only way to read him. This angle of approach simply does not come from a surface reading of the text but is quite historically conditioned.

In chapter 4, Zetterholm covers some familiar territory, elaborating the development of the "new perspective." The initial shot, often acknowledged, was made by Krister Stendahl, who questioned the highly psychologized reading of Paul in his classic article, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" (*HTR* 56 [1963] 199–215). Another blow to the established view came from E. P. Sanders, who questioned the assumption of Judaism's legalism in his massive work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia:

Fortress, 1977). While Sanders's work on Judaism was paradigm-shifting, his reading of Paul maintained old assumptions, resulting in a Paul who did not quite understand the Judaism he supposedly critiqued (pp. 105–8). Zetterholm rightly notes that it was left to James Dunn and N. T. Wright to bring to bear more fully the findings of Sanders with regard to Judaism on a thoroughgoing reading of Paul.

One of Zetterholm's genuine contributions to the larger discussions over perspectives from which to interpret Paul is his positioning of the "new perspective" as a sort of exegetical middle ground between traditional readings and those he calls "radical new perspective" interpreters. He discusses these in his fifth chapter. While these interpreters are not consciously part of any unified school (much like "new perspective" interpreters), they have in common the "general assumption that Paul belonged to first-century Judaism—not that he left it" (p. 161). Perhaps the most influential interpreter among this group is Mark Nanos, who maintains that Paul remained a Torah-observant Jewish person and advocated that Gentiles respect a Jewish lifestyle while among Jews (pp. 147–55). This perspective is growing among evangelical NT scholars, as publications having to do with messianic Judaism slated for the next several years indicate.

Zetterholm chronicles the reaction to these emerging perspectives in chapter 6, in which he reviews the work of Thielman, Das, Gathercole, and Westerholm. While sympathetic interpreters will disagree with this assessment, Zetterholm maintains that these scholars represent a reunion of normative theology with exegesis. In other words, their work is done in a conscious effort to buttress a traditional Protestant theological perspective (p. 192).

In another original move, Zetterholm discusses some new angles of approach that do not necessarily grow organically from discussions over Paul's relationship to Judaism. His seventh chapter appears as something of an add-on to what has gone before, covering philosophical approaches to Paul along with feminist approaches.

It is difficult to review a book like this that tells such an involved and contested story. As discussions among evangelicals have shown, the debates over interpreting Paul go right to the heart of evangelical identity. Everyone is highly invested. In one sense, this is as it should be. Evangelicals take their identity and commitment to Scripture seriously. Alternatively, such passionate investment often clouds judgment and prevents a genuine hearing of the word of God. Not only is the situation among evangelicals highly charged, but there are so many players in the interpretive game to cover. In my estimation, however, Zetterholm does a fair job of representing those he mentions in his narrative. He makes his own commitments clear from the outset, makes extensive reference to the works of each interpreter, and tells the story plainly. He is not an obnoxious champion of any one view, though it is evident that he sees much promise among those who regard Paul as best interpreted within his Jewish context rather than in reaction against it.

This book is a gift for those looking for a longer and broader history behind and leading up to the onset of the "new perspective on Paul." Along with Stephen Westerholm's massive volume (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004]), Zetterholm's work ought to become standard reading for theological students desiring an introduction to the debate over interpretations of Paul and his Jewish heritage. Zetterholm, as mentioned above, is religiously unaffiliated and employs a social-scientific angle of approach, while Westerholm quite consciously favors a more Reformed approach to Paul. Reading these two works together would give students complementary visions of the history leading up to the current contested climate in Pauline studies.

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The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology. By Jason C. Meyer. NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 6. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009, xx + 331 pp., $19.99.

In this revised dissertation (mentor: T. R. Schreiner; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY), Meyer proffers the following thesis: "Paul conceives of the Mosaic (old) covenant as fundamentally non-eschatological in contrast to the eschatological nature of the new covenant. . . . [It] is now old because it belongs to the old age . . . and therefore . . . is both transitory and ineffectual. . . . The new covenant is both eternal and effectual because it belongs to the new age and partakes of the power of the new age, the Holy Spirit" (pp. 1–2, 268). Although the exact relation between covenant and law calls for further clarification, Meyer is content to view them as "intertwined realities" (p. 146) and makes use of passages about the law to determine the nature of the old covenant, for reasons that come into focus as he proceeds.

The "Introduction" (pp. 1–19) sketches the state of the question and sets forth a method for inquiry. E. P. Sanders's influential challenge to the Lutheran polarization of "law" and "gospel," proposing instead a common "pattern of religion" in Palestinian Judaism and Paulinism, did not reckon with the differential in grace between God's election of an earthly people to "covenantal nomism" (Sanders's term) and God's "eschatological intervention" (Meyer's term, p. 2) to create in covenanters what he demands from them. In chapter 1, as throughout the study, Meyer more often takes sides with critics of the new look on Judaism and Paul (D. A. Carson, A. Das, S. Gathercole, D. Moo, T. R. Schreiner, M. Seifrid, F. Thielman, S. Westerholm) than with contributors (J. D. G. Dunn, S. Hafemann, R. Hays, F. Watson, N. T. Wright), while showing sensitivity to nuances of each and a willingness to learn from all.

Rather than confine himself to a study of the nine occurrences of *diathēkē* ("covenant") in Paul's letters, Meyer widens his data set to include related (overlapping, opposing, subordinate, and contiguous) terms that branch out in the same contexts. This linguistically sophisticated method shows how pervasive is the covenant concept in Paul's thought, even where he uses other vocabulary, and paves the way for structural analysis of that concept in relation to other ideas.

"A Transhistorical Understanding" (pp. 20–33) surveys passages where Paul assumes a line of continuity between the OT and the NT, setting references to the biblical "covenants [plural]" (Rom 9:4; Eph 2:12) alongside of God's "promises" (2 Cor 1:20), the prophetic witness of "the law" (Rom 3:21), and the fulfillment of the paschal lamb (1 Cor 5:7). The bulk of what follows homes in on discontinuities.

To lay a foundation, chapter 3 ("The Old and New Antithesis in Paul," pp. 34–61) delves into how Paul applies the adjectives "old" (*archaios* and *palaios*) and "new" (*neos* and *kainos*) to things other than covenants. Passed in review are the old versus the new man (Adam/Christ), letter/Spirit, old leaven and new lump, and, most comprehensively, old creation and new. Structurally, these binary oppositions correspond to others, such as law/faith, sin/righteousness, flesh/Spirit, and slavery/freedom. The conclusion is that Paul's theology pivots on a "transcendental antithesis" (p. 55) between two ages, this world and the world to come, so that newness indicates an "eschatological advance" over the old, "accomplishes what the 'old' failed to do," and "replaces the 'old' " (p. 53).

The central chapters (chaps. 4–6, pp. 62–114, 115–76, 177–229) enter into exegesis of the chief Pauline texts on the two covenants: 2 Cor 3:1–4:6, Galatians 3–4, and Romans 9–11, respectively. Meyer's engagement with the cream of commentaries and relevant monographs on these passages is thorough, penetrating, and judicious. Thematic in all these chapters are "two defining dichotomies" (p. 63): the ineffectuality of the old covenant to redeem versus God's prevenient initiative and recreative energy

in the new; and the temporal boundary of the old era versus the open-ended permanence of the new. Associated with the old covenant are characteristics of the present evil age in contrast to blessings of the age to come that have been inaugurated with the new covenant, in contrasting pairs. In sum, in 2 Corinthians we encounter letter/Spirit, writing on stone tablets versus the human heart, glory/surpassing glory, veiledness/unveiledness, (slavery)/freedom, and condemnation/righteousness. In Galatians, word pairs include doing/believing, curse/blessing, law/promise, mediation/unilateral gift, Mt. Sinai/Jerusalem above, slavery/freedom. In Romans, discussed are doing/believing, division of covenanters (tiny remnant distinguished from unfaithful majority) versus a monolithic body of the faithful, hardening/mercy, and judgment/forgiveness.

Chapter 7 ("The Mosaic Covenant on Old Testament Terms," pp. 230–67) shows that Paul's old/new schema has roots in the self-understanding of the OT. Deuteronomy already identifies the defect in the covenant—Israel is "rebellious," "unbelieving," and "stiff-necked"—and therefore expects the nation's disobedience to draw down the covenant curses (Deuteronomy 28, 31) before God will undertake to make them compliant, as expressed in a passage (Deuteronomy 30) that anticipates new-covenant promises in the major prophets (Isa 59:20–21; Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 11:17–20; 36:24–31). The same schema can be traced in the OT theme of circumcision of the heart (Lev 26:41–42; Deut 10:15–17; 30:6; Jer 4:3–4; 9:25–26; Ezek 4:7–9).

Meyer establishes his thesis hands down. Naturally one might split hairs over exegetical minutiae, but there is no fault in the main buttresses. Readers will have to make allowance for an authorial bent to put argument that ought to be in the text into too many long footnotes and for a glaring habit of enumerating *ad taedium*, both in options for interpretation and in factors for deciding. The only serious anticlimax comes in the "Conclusion" (pp. 268–87), which merely rehashes the already clearly stated thesis and the results of the individual chapters and then hastens straight into "Practical Implications," instead of returning to the big issues outlined in the introduction and driving the screw on errant views of the old covenant in scholarship.

By clarifying the nature of the old covenant, Meyer beams a ray into the ferment over Paul's doctrine of justification. Paul rejected "works of law," not because the very attempt to perform commandments is itself an act of hubris, even before actual transgressions (Luther, Bultmann); nor because Judaism is dogmatically "not Christianity" (Sanders); nor again merely because law-keeping was a boundary marker that served Jewish ethnocentrism (Dunn, Wright); but because (1) Torah belongs to the old covenant, (2) the chosen people no less than the rest of Adamic humanity fails to fulfill these stipulations, and (3) the letter does not regenerate people radically, with the result that its sanctions for inevitable disobedience can only kill (pp. 146–75). Justification by faith, then, is God's answer to the universal human plight of objective guilt before him, made hopeless by God's unbending standard of righteousness clashing with our utter impotence to remedy our own condition. Justification "directly addresses the issue of eternal life . . . not nationalism," the latter emphasis being present in Paul but "secondary and derivative, not primary" (p. 158). Aspects of Meyer's view of the law have been outlined in publications of those listed above who distance themselves from the new perspective (and in my identical but briefer *Way of Salvation* [Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005], chaps. 4–6).

Among "Issues for Further Study" (p. 287), Meyer might have raised afresh, in the light of his findings, the question, also up for debate, whether God's approval of believers at the Last Assize will recognize the Spirit's fruit in a decree that finalizes their justification. Most Protestants, echoing the stout "No" the Reformers retorted in polemics with the Schoolmen, construe justification as the sole item of NT eschatology that is totally realized in the here and now, on an exclusively Christological basis. Yet if a

defining feature of the new covenant is the recreative power of God already moving saints to please him, as Meyer rightly holds, is it coherent to bar off this pneumatic reality from the grounds for God's terminal verdict that people are righteous (Gal 2:17a; 5:4–6; 1 Thess 3:12–13; 2 Thess 1:5–12; 1 Cor 3:13–15; 4:4–5; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 2:13; 8:33–34; 14:10–12, 17–18; 2 Tim 4:8)?

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Philippians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition. By Dean Flemming. New Beacon Bible Commentary. Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2009, 255 pp., $25.99 paper.

Long overshadowed by the theological heavyweights of Romans and Galatians, Paul's short epistle to the Philippians has in recent years gained increasing interest among Pauline interpreters. For example, led by the works of Stephen E. Fowl and Michael J. Gorman, scholars have reassessed the place of the so-called "Christ-hymn" of 2:6–11, not only within Paul's theology in general but also within our understanding of Paul's apostolic purposes for his churches. Thus, the appearance of an explicitly theological commentary on the letter written by an author with broad international experience is a welcome development.

At the same time, I admit to approaching this commentary with some reluctance. I have no reservations about the author, the commentary series itself, or Paul's little jewel of a letter. Rather, the multiplication of commentaries and commentary series on the market is enough to make one's eyes glaze over at the thought of yet one more. What I found when I read the book, however, was an astute compendium of scholarship, both ancient and modern, expressed in a succinct and lucid style. In other words, this is an ideal commentary on Philippians for students, teachers, or pastors who want an informed, even-handed tour through the letter.

After a 24-page introduction, the commentary proper follows the format for the New Beacon Bible Commentary. That is, the letter is broken down into major subsections (seven for Philippians), each of which is examined in a three-stage process. The first stage, a brief "Behind the Text" component, locates the text within its literary and social-historical context. Second, the longer "In the Text" section offers a mostly verse-by-verse treatment of the text based upon the *New International Version*. No Greek is required to follow the discussion, though Flemming refers to the Greek using transliteration when necessary. A final "From the Text" segment examines issues of theological import, history of interpretation, and contemporary application. Sprinkled throughout are short excursuses on a variety of subjects that arise in the course of the letter. For example, Flemming treats such topics as "Women Leaders in Philippi" (4:2–3); "Paul and Financial Support" (4:10–20); "Augustine on Jesus' Incarnation" (2:5–11); and "Paul's Story and Ancient Autobiography" (3:1–11). The book contains no indices, though an index of authors cited would have proved helpful. After all, in a series advertised as written "from the Wesleyan theological perspective," one would like to be able to locate readily what Mr. Wesley himself said about the letter.

Flemming's introduction covers the standard issues for studying Philippians including the city of Philippi, Paul's mission there, and the thorny problem of Philippians's date and place of writing. He also discusses Philippians as rhetoric and as a letter, dealing with issues of unity in the process. Finally, the introduction examines key themes including, among others, the defining story of Christ, the surpassing knowledge of Christ, cruciform living, and partnership in the gospel.

Flemming argues for a Roman imprisonment in the early 60s as a setting for the letter. He regards the letter as a unified composition and offers his own analysis of the rhetorical flow of its argument. He cautions, however, against forcing the text into either epistolary or rhetorical "pigeonholes" (p. 38). In line with much recent work on Pauline theology in general and on the interpretation of this letter in particular, he finds story-shaped theology in Philippians centered on the depiction of Christ in 2:6–11. That story of self-humility and a refusal to exploit what was his own for his own gain then becomes the pattern for the Philippian believers to follow in their own life together.

A review of Flemming's three-part examination of one segment of the letter should provide a flavor of the exegesis that runs through the commentary. Flemming identifies the second major subsection of Philippians as 1:12–26, which he entitles, "Paul's Circumstances: An Example of Faithfulness to the Gospel." In the "Behind the Text" section, he explains several socio-rhetorical conventions that help us understand Paul's argument here in its ancient context. For example, the "disclosure formula" that opens the letter body (1:12; "I want you to know that . . .") is an attested feature of letters in antiquity. In order to illustrate this point, Flemming quotes an example from an early second-century letter. He goes on to examine this subsection in terms of its function as the *narratio*, that is, "the 'narration of facts' that provides a background to the main argument of the letter" (p. 64). Flemming, however, recognizes this passage does more than simply provide information. By citing his personal response to his circumstances, Paul demonstrates for the Philippians what faithfulness to the gospel looks like (as his subsection title makes clear). Finally, he examines this pericope in terms of Paul's appeal to his own character, or *ethos*, and how by the manner of his presentation Paul appeals to his auditors' emotions (known as *pathos*).

Flemming's "In the Text" section breaks down the subsection into three further division: verses 12–14, 15–18a, and 18b–26. The text of Philippians appears in bold print with an occasional transliteration appearing italicized in parentheses. Given the purpose of the series, Flemming's comments are not exhaustive, but his prose is clear and to the point. I regard his selection of what information to include and what to leave out quite prudent.

Flemming includes two excursuses in the section. The first examines the meaning of the ambiguous term "*praetorium*" in verse 13. Following Lightfoot, Flemming concludes this refers to the Praetorian guard in the city of Rome. His second excursus diagrams the explicit comparisons Paul makes between those who preach with good motives and those who preach with false motives.

The four-and-a-half page "From the Text" section draws together implications from Paul's argument in 1:12–26 using six points that are numbered and italicized for easy identification. Stated in parallel fashion using the rubric "*A Perspective on . . .* ," Flemming develops observations on adverse circumstances, on evangelism, on living, on death, on the afterlife, and on prayer. The author roots each point solidly within the text of Philippians and develops each succinctly within a few paragraphs.

Several features of this commentary justify my judgment that it qualifies as an "ideal commentary for students, teachers, and pastors." First, on multiple levels Flemming demonstrates admirable balance. For example, he judiciously selects what to include and what to exclude. In the "Behind the Text" section described above, he introduces his reader to both epistolary and rhetorical conventions relevant for understanding the opening of the body of the letter. At the same time, he does not become bogged down in the details to which engaging such background could lead. In other words, this is a balanced treatment of these issues within the limits of the series. Furthermore, his interpretive conclusions, while not novel (plowing new interpretive ground is not the purpose of the series), do not stray into idiosyncratic territory. This is a reliable,

well-reasoned theological reading of the letter. Finally, Flemming integrates the best of recent scholarship on Philippians with regular doses of readings drawn from the church's best interpreters throughout the centuries. This practice is also in keeping with recent trends in scholarship. Yet I know of no other work at this level that integrates old and new in this fashion.

Each of these features makes this book a useful choice for the undergraduate classroom. Flemming introduces relevant issues, whether socio-rhetorical criticism or matters highlighted in the numerous excurses, which a professor can develop for students. Furthermore, students will be exposed to the best of recent interpretive trends without falling for the widespread prejudice that serious biblical interpretation began a century ago. Finally, Flemming models well-rounded, responsible exegesis expressed in transparent, precise prose. For the teacher or preacher, Flemming does all of the above as well as suggest useful implications of Paul's argument in his "From the Text" sections.

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Colossians and Philemon. By Michael F. Bird. New Covenant Commentary. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009, xiv + 177 pp., $22.00 paper.

Michael F. Bird has written a number of books including *Jesus and the Origin of the Gentile Mission* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), *The Saving Righteousness of God* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), and with James Crossley, *How Did Christianity Begin?* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008). Added to this number is now a commentary on Colossians and Philemon. After summarizing Bird's position on important introductory issues in both Colossians and Philemon, I will survey some of Bird's decisions on notable exegetical debates in both letters and offer a concluding assessment of the commentary.

Concerning introductory issues in Colossians, Bird defends Pauline authorship in terms of the apostle writing with a team of co-workers, especially Timothy (p. 9). Bird has a full discussion of provenance in which he slightly favors Paul writing from an Ephesian imprisonment in AD 55–57 (pp. 9–15) and a lengthy defense identifying Jewish mysticism as the philosophy that Paul opposes in Colossians (pp. 15–26).

Concerning introductory issues in Philemon, Bird affirms Pauline authorship (p. 15), with the letter written from an Ephesian imprisonment sometime between AD 55 and 56 (p. 26). He also favors the more recent dispute mediation hypothesis as opposed to the traditional runaway slave hypothesis because of a lack of technical terms typically used to describe fugitive slaves (p. 27). Therefore, Onesimus came to Ephesus in order that Paul as the *amicus domini* (friend of the master) might "mediate between him and his master over some matter that is now public before the Colossian church" (p. 29).

Also of interest is Bird's reconstruction of the events surrounding the sending of the letters of Philemon and Colossians in which he postulates a gap between the writing and sending of the two letters and thus two different journeys of Onesimus. Paul first sent Onesimus (and Paul's letter to Philemon) back to Philemon, and they were reconciled. Philemon then returned Onesimus back to Paul's side according to Paul's request. Several months to a year later, Paul and his coworkers heard about a "philosophy" in Colossae that threatened the church, and so they wrote Colossians and the circular letter of Ephesians, which Onesimus and Tychicus delivered (p. 10). Ephesians also represents the so-called Laodicean letter referenced in Col 4:16 (p. 10, 15, 125). Bird

admits that this entire reconstruction is "unverifiable," but he argues that it is "plausible" based on the facts that (1) Colossians makes no reference to conflict between Onesimus and Philemon; and (2) the letter of Philemon does not mention Tychicus (p. 10).

In terms of notable exegetical issues in Colossians, Bird takes Col 1:15–20 as an early Christian hymn or poem that represents a "christological interpretation of Genesis 1," though links with the wisdom tradition are "too plain to ignore" (p. 49). In terms of structure, the hymn has two main strophes (vv. 15–16, vv. 18b–20) and two lines in the middle as an abridgment (vv. 17–18a; p. 50). In terms of its rhetorical purpose, the passage functions as the *propositio* that sets forth the epistle's central thesis (p. 50).

Concerning other exegetical issues in Colossians, Bird takes Col 1:24 to say that Paul's suffering absorbs some of the messianic woes for others to the point that he reduces the amount of suffering that they will have to endure because he bears the brunt of "more than his fair share of the corporate sufferings" (p. 66). He assigns a rhetorical function to Col 2:8–23, when he says it "sounds like the *refutatio* of a deliberative discourse by striking up arguments against an opposing viewpoint" (p. 73). Bird argues that the "rulers," "authorities," and the *stoicheia* are hostile angelic beings (p. 76, 87). He hypothesizes that perhaps the Jewish traditions associating angels with the giving of the law and angelic authority over the elements has found its way into the philosophy "in some esoteric mix of angel veneration and asceticism" (pp. 76–77). Bird takes the subjective genitive view of Col 2:11 (the circumcision the Messiah performs on the heart; p. 78); he concludes that Col 2:18 is an objective genitive (worship with the angels; p. 86); and he argues that Paul appropriated the household codes for "apologetic reasons" (p. 114).

Concerning exegetical issues in Philemon, Bird reads verses 16 and 21 as references to Paul's subtle request to set Onesimus free and to return him to Paul as a co-worker (pp. 141, 143). Bird also comments on whether or not Paul was "complicit" in the continuance of slavery. He affirms F. F. Bruce's comments that Paul's words bring slavery to the point where eventually it would "wilt and die" (cited on p. 30). Bird states, "Paul was no William Wilberforce, but without Paul we might never have had William Wilberforce" (p. 30). He also focuses on what this letter teaches us about ministerial formation with regard to the ministry of reconciliation and the ethics of pastoral persuasion (pp. 144–46).

It may be appropriate to comment on the series as a whole since this volume is one of the first to appear in print. I have to confess that I had my reservations about the need for a new commentary series. The brevity of the volumes only reinforced these reservations. The book begins with about 30 pages of introduction to critical issues, and the commentary proper consists of about 97 pages for Colossians and 16 pages for Philemon. The length of this book is thus very comparable to N. T. Wright's contribution in the Tyndale New Testament Commentary series for Colossians and Philemon (31 pages of introduction, 119 pages of commentary for Colossians and 20 pages for Philemon). What does this commentary offer that the Tyndale series does not?

The series preface touts three distinguishing features. First, the New Covenant Commentary Series includes an international cast of authors from Australia, Kenya, India, Singapore, Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom. This feature ensures that the series will speak "from the perspective of the global church" (quote from series preface). Second, the commentary focuses on larger blocks of text, not following a verse-by-verse approach that sometimes leads to atomistic results. Third, each textual unit culminates in a clearly labeled section entitled "Fusing the Horizons," which focuses on contemporary application. The "Fusing the Horizons" sections of the commentary are excellent. The focus on larger blocks of text is certainly helpful in enabling the readers

to follow the biblical flow of thought. Perhaps the greatest benefit is the international scope of the contributors. The more a commentary series addresses the issues of the global church (not just the Western church), the more it holds promise for informing and strengthening the global church.

I now turn from commenting on the series as a whole in order to focus on *Colossians and Philemon*. One could quibble with individual exegetical decisions or question certain historical reconstructions, but one does not expect to agree with everything written in a commentary. My biggest complaint arises from the few occasions that the condensed nature of the commentary leads to confusion. For example, Bird clearly stresses that Paul included the household code for apologetic reasons. While discussing the submission of the wife, Bird asks why it is "fitting" (Col 3:18). Is it fitting because of the creation order, the analogy of Christ and his bride, or conformity to cultural norms? He concludes by saying "we are left to guess" (p. 115).

He also approvingly cites Margaret MacDonald's work on Nympha (Col 4:15) as a leader. Yet he does not clarify the extent of his agreement. Does this mean that he agrees with her views that Nympha was a local church leader and that hosting a house church was arguably the most important leadership role for men or women in the Pauline churches or that the earlier echoes of exaltation with Christ and equal membership in a spiritual body led to a "double consciousness" that would lead them to deny their subjected status even while such submission was still necessary as a strategy for survival in the world of flesh? No answers are given, and so the readers are "left to guess" again.

It is important to point out that there are only a few such occasions and they should not call into question the overall quality of the commentary as seen in three areas. First, it is well written. The author usually writes with admirable precision and concision. I found myself pleasantly surprised by how much he was able to say and how well he was able to say it in such a small space. Second, Bird has an even-handed approach that first carefully weighs the options before proposing a particular reading of the text, which is all the more impressive given the space limitations. Third, the "Fusing the Horizons" sections of the commentary excel at offering relevant and pointed words of application. For example, Bird reminds us that we live in a world in which "inclusiveness has become the new orthodoxy and exclusiveness is the only heresy," but Col 2:8–23 "informs us that some things are not for negotiation, such as the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ, and that nothing can supplement God's actions in his anointed Son" (p. 90). If the church waffles on the doctrine of Christ alone, the result will be a "theology that is at first imprecise, then wishy-washy, then populist, then worldly, and finally trivial" (p. 90). For these three reasons I would commend this commentary as a helpful contribution to the cause of Christ's church worldwide.

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The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of the New Testament. Vol. 1: *The Individual Witnesses*. By Ben Witherington III. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009, 856 pp., $50.00.

Serious readers of this first of two volumes dealing with the theology and ethics of the NT are in for a treat. They can be thankful for InterVarsity's patience in awaiting its completion and Witherington's perseverance in first writing "a good substantial

commentary on every book of the New Testament" (p. 13) *before attempting the task*. The result is a masterful overview of the leading theological and ethical themes of the NT from an accomplished and prolific exegete.

Witherington believes that expounding the theology and ethics of the NT requires two distinct operations. First, one must hear the individual witnesses theologize in their own terms and life settings. This requires patient exegesis employing the complete arsenal of NT methodologies, including socio-rhetorical interpretation, of which the author is a specialist. In his foreword, Witherington introduces an overarching metaphor to visualize what he is attempting to do: "I conceive of the various New Testament witnesses as being like a smallish choir. All are singing the same cantata, but each has an individual voice and is singing its own parts and notes. If we fail to pay attention to all the voices in the choir, we do not get the entire effect" (p. 17). Having already done the exacting work of exegesis in his commentaries on the various books of the NT, Witherington essentially summarizes his findings on the individual witnesses in this first volume. Volume 2, devoted to the second phase, will synthesize and present the common features and core values of the individual voices.

How does Witherington organize and present his findings? Herein lays a perennial problem for doing NT biblical theology. He more or less opts for a chronological approach. Although a major player in the historical Jesus research circles, Witherington ignores the prevailing winds of critical scholarship and decides to open with the voice of Jesus. Aware that there are "no 'Jesus Papers' out there" and we "have no direct access to Jesus" (p. 66), he is nonetheless confident that the Gospels are the products of eyewitness testimony and provide reliable, indirect access to the historical Jesus. He singles out several features of Jesus' life and teaching, as gleaned from the Gospels, that he believes withstand impartial historical inquiry. The chapter is titled "The Alpha and Omega of New Testament Thought," thereby signifying in advance that the teaching of the Master is the core of all NT thought (cf. p. 271). Indeed, in his final synopsis of volume 1, he affirms that "theology and ethics in and of the New Testament is Christocentric, Christotelic, Christophoric . . . a consummation devoutly to be wished" (p. 818).

Witherington unpacks the theology and ethics of the NT in seven well-proportioned chapters: "Paul the Paradigm Setter" (chap. 2); "The Kinsmen and Their Redeemer and Peter and His Principles" (chap. 3); "The Anonymous Famous Preacher" (chap. 4); "Beloved Theology and Ethics" (chap. 5); "One-Eyed Gospels" (chap. 6); and "The End of All Things and the Beginning of the Canon" (chap. 7). Each chapter runs to about 100 pages in length, the shortest being chapter 4 (Hebrews) at 75, and the longest, chapter 5 (Gospel of John and Letters of John), at 137 pages. Each of the seven chapters concludes with a concise summary.

Witherington's two introductory chapters set the stage. The opening chapter, conceived as an overture to the cantata, strikes the keynote for the entire composition: the image of God indelibly imprinted on the life of each believer in Christ—hence the title of the book, *The Indelible Image*. This is what God accomplishes in salvation. An oft-overlooked witness, the author of 2 Pet 1:3–4, summarizes the libretto of Witherington's book: "the actual transformation of the human heart and life into a holy heart and life that mirror the moral character of God" (p. 21). This is followed by another chapter, "Prologue: Blueprints and Bylaws," in which Witherington summarizes, in non-technical language, his basic methodology and presuppositions for doing NT theology and ethics, a must read for students and pastors.

A major burden of Witherington's work is to demonstrate how theology and ethics are inextricably intertwined in the NT documents: "Honestly, I cannot think of a single omnibus volume dealing with New Testament theology and ethics that adequately addresses this relationship or interface" (p. 15). Like a Mozartean motif, he repeatedly

draws attention to the theology-ethics, belief-behavior, creed-conduct nexus in each and every NT witness (e.g. pp. 168, 271–74, 386, 461, 598–601, 721–22, 815–18). For Witherington, the interface between theology and ethics lies in "the concept of the *imago Dei* and its renewal in Christ" (p. 816). In addition, he redresses the relative inattention given to less prominent witnesses such as Hebrews, James, Peter, and Jude and the corresponding tendency to focus one-sidedly on Paul and John. He also draws attention to the importance of OT Wisdom for understanding not only Jesus' theology and ethics, but all the other voices in the cantata as well (pp. 73, 298–300, 472, 553, 556, 662).

Several features of this book will be of interest to potential readers. Witherington is unabashedly Wesleyan and finds the real danger of apostasy lurking in all the individual witnesses. I hope Calvinists will not simply dismiss his book. Much can be learned from the enormous learning evidenced in this *tour de force*. He also strongly affirms the role of women in the NT and their ongoing importance in the life of the modern church. On critical issues, he departs from the majority view of conservative scholarship in several instances. He holds that 2 Peter was not written by Simon Peter. Instead, he follows a growing trend among evangelicals that discerns behind this letter a disciple or devoted follower who appeals to the legacy of the revered apostle; in this case, "the guess of Linus . . . is plausible" (p. 772). According to Witherington, this sort of pseudonymity was not fraudulent. John of Patmos is Witherington's choice for author of the Apocalypse, and this John also probably edited what became later the Gospel of John (p. 466). Witherington is well known for his hypothesis that "the most likely candidate [for the author of the Gospel of John] is Lazarus" (p. 469). The many links between the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Letters mean that Lazarus stands behind them as well. I must say, this does indeed raise Lazarus from the dead!

So what are the strengths of this book? Witherington resolutely pursues his thesis in a coherent, engaging manner. In the foreword, he states his aim: to write "in a lively enough manner that almost anyone can read" (p. 16). Most readers will agree he achieves this goal. Page after page, we hear the cadences of a Southern preacher who has honed his oratorical skills in the pulpit and classroom. Numerous expressions elicit a smile, especially if you have Southern and rural roots. On the other hand, Witherington is well versed in popular culture in general, especially music and film, and this awareness graces his lively prose.

What are the weaknesses? By virtue of Witherington's approach, his book often amounts to a running commentary on the flow of the argument as it unfolds within selected portions of each document—obviously he could not treat the entire NT in this manner or his book would run to nearly 2,000 pages! This inevitably means that some things get slighted. The Pastoral Epistles suffer most from Witherington's approach, showing up only in scattered references throughout the book. Whereas Witherington's approach provides the reader with a carefully crafted lens for interpreting the text, it also presents its own difficulties in locating quickly and comparing the various theological affirmations without first sifting through a lot of material dealing with introductory, literary, and socio-rhetorical matters. The only recourse is to consult the index, which at times can be frustrating. He also tends to overuse pet phrases such as "the last, the least, and the lost." I lost count how many times that one occurs.

This is a long but good book. I hope students and pastors "persevere until the end" (!) because it is a rich resource for preaching and teaching. I encourage Witherington to follow up with an abridgement in one volume, topically arranged, of about 300 pages.

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The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond. By Randall Balmer. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010, vii + 89 pp., $19.95.

In recent years there has been a rash of historical-reflective works on American evangelicalism, tracing its formation (or, from another perspective, questioning its very existence), assessing its impact, critiquing its values, and predicting future trajectories. The proliferation of attention to the movement's history and identity—critical and sympathetic—is a testament to its vitality. Historians of evangelicalism, especially those with some vested interest in their subject, have frequently ventured to offer commentary on the movement. Their insights have provided some of the most poignant commendations and criticisms. It is in this spirit of description and evaluation that Randall Balmer's latest work endeavors to present a concise introduction to the history of American evangelicalism.

Balmer has distinguished himself as one of most perceptive historians of American evangelical Christianity and as an outspoken critic of its real and fabled right-leaning posture. He exercises both of these abilities in signature fashion in *The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond*. Balmer maps the contours and peculiarities of the movement, highlighting revivals and revivalism, predominant millennial views, the evangelical subculture, and the Religious Right. In the history of these four movements, he discerns four coinciding transitions or "critical junctures in the formation of American evangelicalism" (p. 6). These shifts comprise the book's structure: from Calvinist to Arminian theology (especially in terms of soteriologies), postmillennialism to premillennialism, social involvement to alienation, and, finally, institutional isolation to reengagement as a right-wing politico-religious entity. The former two primarily developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the latter two in the twentieth. Balmer peppers his short narrative with a surprisingly numerous array of character sketches that give color to the transformations and ideological diversity of evangelicalism's history, from the likes of Jonathan Edwards and Charles Grandison Finney, to Jimmy Carter and Jerry Falwell, and many in between. By way of his four turning points and through the influence of pivotal figures, Balmer surveys the nearly three-centuries-old history of evangelicalism in North America.

The definition of evangelicalism offered in the book deserves some attention. Balmer broadly identifies the term "evangelical" with its root in the NT gospel or "good news." Particular to the American context, he describes this strand of Christianity—in the same terms he used in his *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (2001; rev. ed. 2004)—as a derivative of "the eighteen-century confluence of three 'P's: Scots-Irish Presbyterianism, Continental Pietism, and the vestiges of New England Puritanism" (p. 2). Furthermore, Balmer suggests that, despite the movement's perpetual evolution, three general qualities or priorities remain discernable: the Bible is regarded as the inspired word of God; conversion or the "born again" experience is considered fundamentally important; and evangelization is a driving ambition. This resembles the now-classic definition offered by David Bebbington in his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989), though with one notable absence. While the Bebbington quadrilateral identifies evangelicalism's distinguishing marks as biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism, Balmer's definition is strangely silent with respect to crucicentrism or the centrality of the atonement. Nevertheless, he confidently maintains that his broad threefold description adequately covers American evangelicalism.

The great benefit of *The Making of Evangelicalism* is that in taking a quick, wide-angle snapshot of the historical landscape, Balmer offers a clear view of his perspective on the most important ideas and events that shaped the movement. There is much to

appreciate, conceptually and pedagogically, about his approach. The four transitions he outlines are undoubtedly among the most consequential in the history of American evangelicalism, and he skillfully uses them to orient readers to his take on the movement's strengths and weaknesses. For him, evangelicalism has struggled to find its place in society. The "most effective and successful religious movements in American history," Balmer writes, "have always situated themselves on the margins of society, not in the councils of power" (p. 77). Evangelicalism has failed when it has tried to assume the role of a political entity, withdrawn into an insular subculture, or become excessively otherworldly. In a few nostalgic instances Balmer looks back to antebellum evangelicalism and praises many of its efforts to realize the kingdom of God: the abolition of slavery, formation of common schools, fight against alcohol abuse, rehabilitation of criminals, and advocacy for women's rights. Perhaps more than anything else, Balmer's book is a story of success and failure, a cautionary tale of how evangelicalism has gotten some things right and many others wrong.

In this way, the book conveys as much about its author as it does its subject. The fruits of dispensationalism and political conservatism particularly disturb Balmer. He cites evangelicalism's general disregard for the environment in the mid- to late-twentieth century and, almost randomly, its poor religious architecture as material consequences of dispensationalism. But he saves his strongest disapprobation for conservative evangelicalism's political engagement in the same part of the twentieth century, sharply criticizing the Religious Right as the chief culprit. In fact, given the chapter Balmer dedicates to the political movement and the tone of his introduction and conclusion, it is evident that this castigation is the culmination of the whole narrative. He highlights the Southern Baptist Convention's moderate stance on abortion in the early to mid-1970s and Bob Jones University's segregationist policies of the same period as representative of the Religious Right's moral and political quagmire. While Balmer certainly identifies important problems in American evangelicalism, his own political agenda skews portions of the historical narrative. As one example, he describes the Southern Baptist Convention of the 1970s as "hardly a redoubt of liberalism" and uses their affirmations on abortion to demonstrate the diversity of evangelical positions on the issue (p. 61). While Balmer's argument is valid, the illustration he chooses is a poor one—the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1970s *was* largely a redoubt of liberalism. The book's disproportionate attention to the Religious Right is fundamentally unhelpful. The ideals and actions of conservative evangelical politics, good and bad, are part of the movement's history, but they are not the whole story. However, the direction in which Balmer moves in the last portion of the book, and at which he hints from the opening pages, virtually silences those segments of evangelicalism that did not align with the Religious Right and those that did address national problems from the "margins of society." It is unfortunate that in this respect Balmer did not observe his own conclusion that "evangelicalism is anything but homogenous—racially, theologically, or politically" (p. 3).

Evangelicalism has accumulated—and deserved—its share of wounded (and often embittered) lovers, voices crying in the wilderness, exasperated deserters, and spectator skeptics. Of all of the movement's critics, Balmer has been and remains one of the most insightful and concerned. In *The Making of Evangelicalism*, he endeavors to trace where the religious movement has been and question where it is going. The merits of his narrative are real and many of the cautions he offers for the future of evangelicalism are wise and sincere. Regrettably, however, Balmer's political partialities heavily influence not only his reflective commentary but his historical interpretations as well. Thus, the book is a perceptive and beneficial analysis from a particular ideological

location, but it is not the place to start for those who would like to gain a clearer and fuller understanding of the distinctives of American evangelicalism.

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