Book Reviews

Old Testament Turning Points: The Narratives That Shaped a Nation. By Victor H. Matthews. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005, 208 pp., $ 18.99.

The writers of the Old Testament re-used themes, re-visited subjects, and repeated language. They did so in order to carry to a new generation those historical-theological messages God had revealed in the past. Most modern seminary graduates and any number of today's Bible readers recognize this biblical strategy. Unfortunately, Victor Matthews' book does not present much that is new for modern Bible readers who are aware of this "repetition" of material in scripture.

The subtitle of Matthews' volume is his thesis. Old Testament writers recognized that certain events, according to Matthews, marked Israel as a people of the covenant. These events were preserved in historical narrative. Later, addressing new audiences and new settings, biblical writers re-used elements of those historical narratives (themes, language, theological message, etc.) to keep alive and to renew the idea that Israel was a covenant people. These basic narratives are seen in the volume under review as the "narratives that shaped a nation." Matthews' point is, then, that the shaping and re-shaping of the nation went on primarily through the re-use of the stories. Dr. Matthews illuminates the process using eight narratives but does not insist that these eight are the only ones re-used or the only ones which contributed to Israel's continuing identification.

The eight narratives discussed in this volume are: the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, Yahweh's establishing a covenant with Abraham (including material from Genesis 12, 15, and 17), Moses leading the people out of Egypt (material from Exodus 2-20), David's selection of Jerusalem as his capital (extending through 2 Samuel 7), Jeroboam and the Northern Kingdom's secession, Samaria's fall, Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent exile, and Cyrus' victory over Babylon and the Exiles' return (including the work of Ezra and Nehemiah). Recognizing the inherent significance of the narratives chosen, few readers would fault Matthews for his choices. With the possible exception of the Garden of Eden account, each of the event-clusters is theologically significant and surfaces repeatedly in the Old Testament material. (This review does not quarrel with the theological significance of the Genesis 3 material. But one can question how often the narrative and its themes recur or are re-used in the Old Testament. In my estimation the Genesis 3 material is used or referred to more often in the New Testament.)

Professor Matthews has written extensively on Old Testament history and on Israel's setting in the ancient Near East. Consequently, the reader expects a thorough presentation of the historical events behind the biblical narrative and is not disappointed. More, the author provides occasional side-bar references to

extra-biblical literature to show the historical and intellectual context of the people of the Old Testament. This presentation of history and culture may be this small volume's greatest strength, but it is not the author's purpose. He wants to key on the audience's "insider information" which the prophet or biblical writer can assume (i.e., what the audience already knows about the story). Also, Matthews wants to find the "echoes" of the narratives in later writings, re-used themes or elements which the biblical writer used with later audiences to make an earlier message relevant. Matthews believes insider information and echoes constitute a "cultural portfolio," a portfolio which includes the terms of Israel's covenant with Yahweh, reflections of the ethical character of Yahweh, and the justification of Yahweh's punishment of covenant-breakers (7-8).

Chapter six of *Old Testament Turning Points* discusses the narrative of Samaria's fall and demonstrates Matthews' method. Initially, Matthews refers to questions raised by the destruction of the northern kingdom, a portion of the people of God, questions about Yahweh's activity and character and about the religious implications for Judah. Then the author presents the "Historical Overview," a quite good description of the northern kingdom's fall. Then he ranges back and forth through 1 and 2 Kings to identify the "Deuteronomic historian's" rationale for God's judgment on Israel. But Matthews does not make the "insider viewpoint," what later readers (those reading after 722 B.C. and even after the exile) knew or remembered. (By assuming the books of Kings and especially 2 Kings 17 are heavily edited after the exile, Matthews creates some difficulties for many readers of this journal.) Matthews believes the final form of Amos' and Hosea's books date to a time after Samaria's fall and believes they were edited in part to provide justification for Yahweh's judgment. Isaiah 9 and Rabshakeh's speech in Isaiah 36, along with Psalm 78, argued as post-exilic, echo the narrative of Samaria's fall as a testimony to Yahweh's judgment according to Matthews.

Any proposal describing how biblical writers used events and themes must deal with the dating of the various materials. But the gulf between critical scholars, of which Matthews is one, and conservative scholars is often broad on this issue. This small volume does an acceptable job of describing the prophets', poets', and biblical historians' use of past events to make their points about God's activity. But the question of whether or not 2 Kings 17-19, the edited books of Amos and Hosea, etc. reflect a post-exilic perspective is a difficult one. Some conservative scholars still question even the existence of a Deuteronomist or a Deuteronomistic History. Still, this volume offers something to the reader regardless of theological stance.

Matthews is a careful historian who knows the ancient Near Eastern world and the modern scholarly world. There is much to be learned here even if the reader disagrees with Matthews' developmental scheme. The author's twelve pages of "Works Cited" is a good reading list for Old Testament history. Moreover, the author provides a brief, but helpful, glossary of terms, defining terms such as "utopia," "reflection story," and "hegemony." A biblical index and subject index make the book more user-friendly, too. Still, this book is not for the biblical neophyte.

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Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth. By Michael Carden. London: Equinox, 2004, 226 pp., $26.95.

The last half of the twentieth-century saw an explosion of books advocating a revisionist approach to the traditional Christian understanding of homosexual behavior as sin. *Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth* is another such work. In fact, the author, Michael Carden, repeats many arguments made earlier by both Derrick Sherwin Bailey in *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (1955) and John Boswell in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980). Yet, Carden goes further and illustrates the bizarre extremes to which "gay hermeneutics" can reach.

Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth is actually Carden's dissertation from the University of Queensland. A self-identified homosexual, Carden claims the genesis of this book was a "Queer Men's discussion group" he was affiliated with in 2001. According to Carden, several men in the group discussed suicide. Carden claims one reason these men considered suicide is the culture of heterosexuality which abuses homosexuals. In this culture of oppression, he claims various passages of Scripture "have been twisted and braided to form the nooses that have choked out many a life" (2). Carden's dominant theme is that heterosexuality is used as a weapon of intolerance, especially by men. He bemoans what he calls a "heterosexual paramountcy [*sic*]" which "underlies the everyday routine of life" (1) and is deeply concerned because the dominant culture of heterosexuality "strives to enforce uniformity and abhors sexual plurality" (2).

Carden's hermeneutical goal is to "detoxify" the Bible of homophobic accretions (14). As one might imagine, the Biblical text which concerns Carden most is Genesis 19. To achieve this goal, Carden employs a hermeneutic of homosexual deconstruction. Carden claims the real sin of Sodom was not homoeroticism, but really homophobia! He says, "In my reading, therefore, inhospitality is signified by male rape as an act of *homophobic and xenophobic* violence." He goes on to say that male rape is actually used "to maintain a system of patriarchal, compulsory heterosexuality" (37). Thus, Carden inverts the traditional understanding of the Sodom story. In so doing, he demonizes heterosexuals in the same way he claims others have demonized homosexuals! Carden claims that a "homophobic reading" of Genesis 19 is a Christian invention in contrast to Rabbinic readings of the text which, he claims, did not emphasize sexual sin.

Reflecting an approach common among revisionist hermeneutics, Carden takes great care to explore the theme of Sodom as a "rich and powerful society/class that oppresses the poor" (47). In fact, this is indeed part of Sodom's sin as made clear in Ezekiel 16:46-58. However, Carden downplays the nature of Sodom's sin as described in Jude 7 and says there is nothing in Jude "that requires a predominantly homosexual understanding of Sodom and its

sin" (59). In reality, Jude 7 says Sodom and Gomorrah "indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh" (NAS). Carden simply fails to explore the substance of the text in Jude 7. The theme of sexual immorality combined with pursuing "strange flesh" reflects an understanding of licentious behavior among the cities. Many have understood the reference to "strange flesh" to mean a rejection of heterosexual marriage as being the creation mandated arena for sexual expression (Genesis 2:24-25).

If there is anything positive to be found in Carden's work, it may be in his review of the way early church fathers approached Genesis 19. Yet even here, his approach is flawed because he claims Chrysostom was the first to claim same-sex desire as the sin of Sodom (144). This is only plausible if one accepts Carden's questionable approach to Jude. Furthermore, Carden engages in an argument from silence. Just because some early church fathers do not explicitly state their understanding of Sodom's sin does not mean they would agree with Carden's interpretation. In fact, to a person the early church fathers would have found Carden *anathema!* By limiting his survey to their explicit references to Genesis 19, Carden leaves the reader with a less than adequate impression of the sexual ethics of early Christians. Without question, the early church understood heterosexual monogamous marriage as the only appropriate arena for sexual expression.

I want to warn the reader that Carden includes explicit descriptions of homosexual acts (34). In an anachronistic hermeneutical leap, Carden wants us to believe that contemporary immoral behavior is in some way informative for the meaning of the original text. The inclusion of numerous curse words and vivid descriptions of sexual acts reveal that Carden's work is not really about the meaning of the Biblical text, but it is more about abandoning boundaries for sexual expression. Given his overall presentation, Carden's claim that he is not trying "to prove that heterosexuality is bad, or that gay and bisexual men can do no wrong" rings rather hollow (38). Furthermore, on his website, Carden is more explicit about his motives and says, "My politics is definitely on the left with strong anarchist leanings" (see www.sodomology.com). His "anarchist" approach is demonstrated when he recasts the September 11, 2001 bombings as an incident of rage by the "outcast and oppressed" against the "affluent West" (195).

Carden does not veil his disdain for conservative Christians and says, "The hermeneutical divide between Christian fundamentalists and myself is vast, and furthermore, I refuse to acknowledge their . . . claim to be the sole custodians of genuine Christianity" (11). In reality, Carden's disjoint is not between himself and "fundamentalists," but between himself and any sense of reasoned exegesis.

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Principle Preaching: How to Create and Deliver Sermons for Life Application. By John R. Bisagno. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002, 200 pp., $14.99.

John R. Bisagno, Pastor Emeritus of Houston's 22,000 member First Baptist Church, draws upon over thirty years of pastoral experience in *Principle Preaching*. The book represents Bisagno's attempt to teach pastors how to craft a sermon that will prove relevant in the lives of those who hear it. Bisagno states that most pastors preach a sermon outline that is predictable. In such a sermon, the points usually contain life application principles, though not identified as such. Herein lies the difference between Bisagno's method and the more "traditional" method he reacts to. His method advocates the use of applicable imperatives, statements the hearer can remember and apply, as opposed to the usual propositional statements that offer little more than information that is easily forgotten.

The book is quite valuable in that it is extremely practical. Here is a book that the average pastor can pick up and instantly benefit from. It contains forty-seven sermon outlines that the pastor can use to assist in formulating a principle-based sermon. Each sermon includes points that are highly applicable, complete with brief commentary by Bisagno. It also contains a tone of encouragement in that the author believes that preaching is a discipline that can be learned by anyone who will devote the time necessary.

Another strong point of the book is the attitude the author maintains about his method of preaching. He very clearly states that his is not the only way to preach. Because of this modest approach, the reviewer was much more open to hearing the things the author had to say. In addition, the author makes it clear that while there may be many applications to a given Scripture, there is only one correct interpretation. This might anger proponents of postmodern hermeneutics, but we should applaud Bisagno in this regard for taking a stand for Scriptural truth. Hence, the book has some definite value, but a few warnings might be in order before selecting it as a primary preaching text.

First, the book's structure is a bit weak. Of its 200 pages, only 20 are devoted to the principles behind the author's method. He proceeds to offer 180 pages of examples before he has offered substantial biblical or philosophical rationale for his method. However, such substantiation may not be necessary because of his many years of leadership and the certain allegiance he commands from many Southern Baptists. While his conclusions may not necessarily be in error, it is the reviewer's opinion that they are simply assumed and not supported. For one who is convinced of the author's credibility, this may suffice. However, others in the field might like to see a little more of the "why" behind the "how."

Secondly, the 180 pages of sermon examples given lack any exposition. The author freely admits this, but the student of homiletics must be left wondering how one can skip exposition and immediately arrive at application. Such a shortcut could, in some cases, prove quite dangerous theologically. The author maintains that expository preaching is, among other things, exposing the depth of the text. However, he offers no counsel on how this is achieved. It may be that the book is aimed at readers that already possess a working knowledge of

homiletics. In such a case, the danger may not be as great. However, if a first semester preaching student were to base his homiletical understanding solely on this text, he may learn a philosophy of preaching that is quite lacking.

Also disconcerting is the author's constant quotation of Rick Warren without citation. In fact, the author even admits that the steps of principle preaching come from Warren and not himself. Therefore, is the basis of this book found in Warren or Bisagno? In addition, the author defensively asserts, on more than one occasion, that principle preaching is not shallow preaching. If this is true, the reader is left wondering why this method needs to be constantly defended.

In comparison with other preaching texts, *Principle Preaching* makes a contribution as a supplement to a more in-depth text. Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) is a far more informative text, but *Principle Preaching* will offer several sermon ideas to supplement the theory found in Robinson's text. Wayne McDill's *The Twelve Essential Skills of Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998) is also useful as a primary text, but might challenge Bisagno in that it includes examples of sermon outlines that are not immediately applicable. Hence, the two, when read together, provide the student with differing perspectives that might enhance the learning experience.

In conclusion, *Principle Preaching* is a valuable text that would be helpful to today's pastor in that it challenges him to preach sermons that are relevant. The outlines and sermon ideas that are provided will greatly assist the preacher in getting started with this. However, the book should only be used as a secondary source. Hermeneutics, homiletics, and other principles of bible exposition are not found in this text. These disciplines need to be mastered before correct interpretation resulting in appropriate application can be made.

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Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature. By Craig A. Evans. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005, xxxvi + 539 pp., $34.95 hardcover.

The latest work by Professor Craig A. Evans is both impressive and overwhelming. Impressive, in that it presents as succinctly as possible a full spectrum of the literature related to, and loosely contemporary with the New Testament (NT), a massive body of writings with which the prospective student in the field should be more than merely familiar. Overwhelming, in as much as it confirms that the study of the NT, as understood and practiced today, is not for the faint of heart: it demands the breadth of knowledge of an encyclopedist, well versed in the literature, history, background thought, and culture of the times that cradled the writings of the emerging NT canon. The volume is designed as "an introduction to the diverse bodies of literatures that are in various ways cognate to biblical literature, especially to the New Testament" (i). It must be said at the outset that one could hardly find a more qualified author for such an

endeavor than Professor Evans, a trademark name in NT and cognate studies. He backs this survey of the literary background of the NT with an erudition proven through the publication of numerous volumes in most, if not all, the fields covered in this book.

As expected, there is an immense amount of valuable information between these two covers. The book divides the literature relevant to the study of the NT into eleven corpora. The first two chapters cover the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Chapter three is devoted to the Dead Sea Scrolls, while chapter four treats versions of the Old Testament, including the Septuagint, the Masoretic text, the Old Latin alongside the Vulgate, and the Peshitta. Chapter five is devoted to the foremost non-Christian Jewish authors contemporary with the events and writings of the NT: Philo and Josephus. Although technically the Targums could have been treated with the versions, their importance persuaded the author to allot them individual attention in chapter six. A fairly comprehensive presentation of the Rabbinic writings in chapter seven sheds light on the relevant passages in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and early midrashim for NT studies, without neglecting the later writings of the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. The last four literary groups investigated are spin-offs of the NT writings themselves. The New Testament Pseudepigrapha—a group of pseudonymous gospels, books of acts, epistles and apocalypses—are treated in chapter eight. A brief survey of the Christian Church Fathers, primarily the Apostolic and several earlier Fathers is found in chapter nine. The Gnostic writings found in the Codices of Nag Hammadi, a wealth of primary sources for our understanding Gnosticism, make up chapter ten. Finally, chapter eleven includes important Greco-Roman authors (Tacitus, Suetonius, etc.) and the Corpus Hermeticum. The wealth of papyri, inscriptions, coins, and ostraca, rarely included in previous books of this sort, is given attention in this chapter as well.

Each one of these chapters opens with a complete listing of the primary sources considered under the respective category, followed by a brief description of the literary corpus as a whole. A concise paragraph summarizes each writing, followed by a segment of essential bibliography with titles grouped into texts, surveys, commentaries, and critical studies. A further subsection reviews the most important political and theological topic in the writings. In the case of the Apocrypha, for example, the topics considered include God, piety and martyrdom, salvation history, Zionism, defense of the Hasmonean dynasty, Messiah, resurrection, eschatology, intercession of the saints, and the canon of Scripture. Where necessary, a succinct presentation of other aspects pertinent to that literary corpus is included, such as the brief history of the community responsible for the writings associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls. A general bibliography concludes each chapter.

Through seven well-chosen examples chapter twelve highlights the practical role played by the extracanonical writings as backdrops for helping the exegete achieve a more nuanced understanding of the NT text. Selected for presentation are the Nazareth sermon in Luke 4: 16-30, the parables of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) along with the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants (Mk 12:1-11 and par.), Jesus' quotation of Psalm 82:6 in John10:33-36, Paul's take on

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in Romans 10:5-10, the apocalyptic language and imagery in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, and, lastly, Paul's comparison between Jesus, the "last Adam," with the "first Adam."

The book continues to both enlighten and delight through the content of six very helpful appendices. Foremost among them, the 50 plus pages of the second appendix—worthy of a chapter on its own—tallies the quotations, allusions, and parallels to the New Testament; it is a gold mine of information that will put many students of NT intertextuality in its debt. Three sets of indices for modern authors, ancient writings and writers, and ancient sources, wrap up what will assuredly become a top reference book in the field for years to come.

While one would think twice before pointing out any deficiencies of such a project, this reviewer wonders about the relatively minor importance allocated to the Patristic Writings, a mere ten pages, especially in light of the fact that its cousin corpus, the Rabbinic Writings, were allotted no less than forty pages. In addition, some of the author's assessments appear a bit too enthusiastic in support of the digital revolution. This is true of Evans' comment on G. Lisowsky's *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament* that "computer-accessed databases have made this work obsolete" (157). While it is true that computer technology has significantly enhanced the ability to analyze the biblical text, the classic format reference volumes will always be needed at least to double-check the computer generated data, if not actually to provide valuable information still unavailable in electronic format. A case in point is E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the Other Greek Versions of the OT* and its useful lists of Hebrew-Greek and Greek-Hebrew equivalences. Evans' assessment reflects rather a future goal than a present reality, since parallel and simultaneous searches in MT and LXX are unavailable in any of the Bible software with which this reviewer is familiar. Finally, while the author's choices in compiling the bibliographical sources fully satisfy if not exceed the reader's expectations, an important title here and there has been omitted, none more noticeable than the first volume in David Instone-Brewer's *TRENT* series (Eerdmans, 2004) for the bibliography on the Rabbinic writings.

These caveats, however, will hardly diminish the usefulness of this remarkable repository of information. While it is true that the material covered has already been published in earlier compendia—*inter alia,* Stone's *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Fortress, 1984), Mulder's *Mikra* (Fortress, 1990), Saebo's *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament* (Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1996), or the *Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200*, (7 vols.; CUP, 1984-88), Evans' *ATNTS*, with its updated bibliography, its compact format, and its breadth of scope recommends itself as the most judicious alternative, especially, though not exclusively, for the prospective student in the field. One only wishes that the publishers had included in the price the possibility to access the electronic format of the volume's bibliographies and thus assist the customers in updating their bibliographical database.

Finally, proper acknowledgement should be given to the dedication note in the opening pages of the book, a part that is prone to go unnoticed. In it, Prof. Evans acknowledges his indebtedness to the mentoring of another renowned NT

scholar, Prof. James A. Sanders. Valued by most, but perhaps not as widely practiced, mentoring, or—to use the NT parlance—discipleship, is most certainly the finest way in which the wealth of information in this book should be disseminated among the guild of NT students.

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Hebrews: A New Translation and Commentary. By Craig R. Koester. The Anchor Bible Commentary, vol. 36. New York: Doubleday, 2001, xxiii + 604 pp., $47.50 hardcover.

The last two decades have witnessed a radical change of fortunes in the scholarly attention given to *pros Hebraious*, with half a dozen substantial contributions in some of the most respected series of NT commentaries. Each one of these commentaries, with their particular strengths, has proven to be an invaluable guide for a fresh understanding of this important 1st century document. Craig Koester's commentary on Hebrews continues the ascendant trend by replacing the somewhat idiosyncratic commentary of G. W. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews* (Doubleday, 1972), the previous entry in the Anchor Bible Commentary series.

The commentary keeps to the familiar format of the series. The substantial introduction covers a vast array of prolegomena, followed by an extensive bibliography grouped in two sections: commentaries chronologically arranged and other books and articles. In a section-by-section fashion, the commentary proper includes a new translation of the epistle, followed by textual and exegetical notes and by theological reflection.

The introduction is divided into five major sections. The first section offers a helpful conspectus of the place and role of the epistle throughout the history of biblical scholarship, going as far back as Clement of Rome (for the Western Church) and Clement of Alexandria (for the Eastern Church). Beside the patristic and medieval eras with their dominating issues, also surveyed are various positions and controversies belonging to the Humanist, Lutheran, Reformed, and Roman Catholic traditions, and modern times. It must be emphasized that, while most commentators include brief reviews of previous commentaries, Koester's interaction with his predecessors is significantly more substantial. This rich diachronic arrangement is very beneficial for the modern exegetes, more prone than their predecessors to disregard the deep roots of the scholarship on Hebrews. With all its usefulness, however, such a chronological layout has its drawbacks, none more evident than the somewhat arbitrary placement of the issues addressed. For example, some prolegomena issues such as authorship, date, destination and the addressees are allotted to the first section, while others—a more thorough profile of the addressees—are discussed under section two.

The second section on social setting profiles the history and present stance of the Christian community addressed. Koester contends that by the time the epistle

was written, the community had already undergone two distinctive phases: conversion, as a result of the apostolic kerygmatic activity, followed by a period of persecution which consolidated their communal solidarity. With the passage of time, however, a new spiritually unhealthy and dangerous phase of friction and malaise had set in. The stern warning passages in the epistle make perfect sense in this particular situation. As far as the community's constitution is concerned, Koester argues that the pattern in the epistle suggests that "Hebrews addressed one of several house churches in a given area" (74). This particular Christian group, distinctly different from its counterpart, an ordinary Jewish community, was under various attacks from the non-Christians, with whom they coexisted in an environment dominated by Greco-Roman culture.

The third section deals with one of the most prominent aspects of the epistle, its literary and rhetorical style. Instead of opting for either the deliberative or epideictic rhetoric as the rhetorical pattern of the epistle, Koester acknowledges, much in agreement with this reviewer, that a clear demarcation between the two is both impossible and unnecessary. Rather, it is precisely the combination of these two forms which assures that the epistle's exhortations both mirror and address the various needs of the spiritually mixed congregation. The two main imports of the rhetorical analysis are, first, its contribution to the elucidation of a proposed fivefold structure of Hebrews, reminiscent of H. D. Betz' organization of Galatians in his ground-breaking commentary (Hermeneia, 1979) and second, its offering the reader a fresh glance into the *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* of the author's rhetorical strategy. In the closing subsection (94 ff.), one finds a conglomerate of patterns of speech and other stylistic features well known to the careful reader of Hebrews, helpfully catalogued and illustrated.

Concluding the introduction are the sections on the theology and the text of Hebrews. In the former, Koester interacts with selected theological dominants in the author's message: cosmology and eschatology, Christology, promises, covenants and Law, the Scriptures, divine action and human response. The latter includes a helpful tabulation of the textual witnesses for the epistle, wrapping up this rich and very informative introduction.

The reader's high expectations are further gratified by the thorough and balanced exegetical work offered in the commentary proper. The epistle is structured in five major sections, following the categories of classical rhetoric: the *exordium* (1:1-2:4), arresting the attention of the hearer/reader; the *propositio* (2:5-9) that succinctly states the main issues addressed; the *arguments*, a three-tiered strategy of persuasion with cumulative impact (2:10-6:20, 7:1-10:39, and 11:1-12:27), amassing the evidence to support the author's position; and, finally, the *peroratio* (12:28-13:21), the closing exhortation. Each section opens with a brief statement of the argument, followed by the author's new translation, one subsection at a time, with exegetical notes of various nature (primarily text-critical, grammatical, syntactical, and lexical, but unfortunately a bit thin on discourse analysis). The *Comment* in turn probes the theological thought of the epistle. Throughout the commentary, the reader finds extensive interaction with the text and the critical scholarship, and even more, a fair presentation of legitimate exegetical alternatives, especially in those key passages in which the choice is notoriously difficult, e.g., 4:13, 5:14, 6:4-8, or

10:30. While the author is judicious in adducing evidence to support his arguments, not all are conclusive or sufficient. A case in point is the analysis of the quotation of Psalm 8:3-4 in Hebrews 2:6-8, in which Koester assesses the implications of the Author's using the LXX text of the Psalm as opposed to a Hebraic text. While this reviewer agrees with Koester's overall conclusion, he finds fault with his assertion that "the MT reading *m`ƒ* can only be taken quantitatively to mean 'a little lower' in status, while the LXX's *brachy* can also be understood temporally as 'a little while'" (216). The Hebrew text of Job 24:24, Isaiah 10:25, and Hosea 1:4, seem to indicate otherwise.

A point of more serious disagreement with Koester's commentary, however, is with his proposed overall structure of the epistle, which emerges primarily as result of employing the instruments of rhetorical analysis. It is beyond dispute that renewed attention given by NT scholars to rhetorical approaches has greatly improved our understanding of the message of the NT documents. At times, however, the application of rhetorical criticism does not appear to enhance our understanding, but rather to confuse it. This seems to be the case for the unconvincing choice of Hebrews 2:5-9 as the *propositio* of the epistle. While certainly such a choice is possible, to this reviewer it is at least disputable, if not highly improbable, especially in light of other towering theological statements in the epistle, such as the recurring use of Psalm 109 LXX in, *inter alia*, Hebrews 4:12, 8:2,3, and 10:19. Furthermore, competing against Koester's choice stands the intricate microstructure of the epistle in the opening section 1:5-2:18, consisting of two inclusio-type expositions, 1:5-13 (marked by "for to which of the angels . . . ?" in 1:5 and 1:13) and 2:5-16 (with the distinctly similar 2:5 and 2:16, "for it is not to angels . . . "), bracketing the first warning passage 2:1-4. To isolate a *propositio* from this beautifully constructed and balanced passage, which in turn forces a rather unnatural division of the text (1:1-2:4; 2:5-9; and 2:10-6:20!), borders insensitivity to the stylistic pageantry exhibited by the author of Hebrews.

Be that as it may, the commentary will rightfully be ranked among the most important analyses of the epistle to the Hebrews, and any further work on this ancient document will have to engage with its distinct approach and conclusions. If there is a downside to Koester's masterful addition to the plethora of valuable commentaries on Hebrews, it must be the fact that his work has made the painful conundrum of choosing one single good commentary on Hebrews even more difficult.

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1 Peter Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament. by Karen H. Jobes. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005, 364 pp., $39.99

The Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (BECNT) seeks to provide "commentaries that blend scholarly depth with readability, exegetical detail with sensitivity to the whole, and attention to the critical problems with

theological awareness". Karen Jobes has faithfully executed the BECNT mission. In addition, she brings two fresh contributions to the study of 1 Peter by offering a new proposal for the sociohistorical background of the letter, and by providing a much needed objective criterion for discussing the quality of the Greek of 1 Peter.

With respect to the sociohistorical background of the letter, Jobes observes that most commentators simply assume that the original audience was native to Asia Minor and that their conversion was *in situ*. Jobes questions the validity of this assumption by asking how there could be so many conversions over an area of about 129,000 square miles when there is no historical evidence of evangelistic efforts in most of the regions mentioned in 1 Peter 1.1. As an alternative, Jobes proposes that the Christians of 1 Peter previously lived in Rome during the time of Claudius' reign (early 40s). It was in Rome where they were converted and where they first had contact with Peter. They were later exiled to Asia Minor because of the disturbances between Jews and Christians regarding Jesus. Jobes corroborates her proposal by integrating three seemingly independent datum: (a) Claudius intensely colonized all five of the provinces of Asia Minor mentioned in 1 Peter 1.1; (b) it was not uncommon for emperors to colonize new territories with groups viewed as troublemakers in Rome; (c) various traditions put Peter in Rome in the early 40s. As a result, Jobes takes a similar line as John Elliott, arguing that the recipients of 1 Peter were literal foreigners (parepi/dhmoi) and resident aliens (pa/roikoi) whose literal experience served as a spiritual metaphor for Christians everywhere who were culturally alienated because they were Christians.

The primary weakness of this proposal is its silence with respect to one key testimony from the internal evidence. 1 Peter consistently presupposes that the recipients of the letter were at one time participating members of the very society that now ostracizes them, and that it was their conversion to Christianity, their new 'way of life' (a0nastrofh/) that was responsible for their changed social status amongst their compeers (see esp. 1 Peter 4.2-3). Nevertheless, Jobes' insightful research into Claudius' colonization program in Asia Minor could be combined with an investigation of the rapidly growing influence of imperial theology and emperor worship in Asia Minor to shed new light on the nature of suffering in 1 Peter.

Jobes' second fresh contribution addresses the issue of authorship. Most who deny Petrine authorship do so on the foundation that the Greek of the epistle is simply too good for an uneducated fisherman from Palestine. Using quantitative analysis, Jobes compares the Greek syntax of 1 Peter with writings from native and non-native Greek speakers. The primary conclusion of this comparative study is that Semitic interference is clearly present in 1 Peter. Additionally, her objective examination of the Greek syntax calls into question the rather subjective claim that 1 Peter's Greek is of high quality. While her contribution cannot prove Peter was the author, it does show that whoever wrote it spoke Greek as a second language. No one arguing for non-Petrine authorship of 1 Peter can afford to ignore this important study.

Jobes' fresh contributions do not end with introductory matters. Her familiarity with the Septuagint makes her approach unique among 1 Peter

commentators and the reader benefits from the many times she roots Peter's words to the Septuagint context to which they allude. One example of this can be seen in her analysis of the milk metaphor in 1 Peter 2.2. While almost every 1 Peter commentator understands the pure milk as a reference to the word of God, Jobes' intimacy with the Septuagint has led her to argue convincingly that the pure milk refers rather to God. Picking up on the allusion to Psalm 34 (33 LXX) in the succeeding verse, "if you indeed have tasted that the Lord is good," she hears the milk metaphor within the greater context of the psalm that speaks of hoping and taking refuge in God in times of anxiety, persecution, affliction and want. Thus, the word preached (1 Peter 1.25), has given 1 Peter recipients the initial taste of the Lord. In exhorting his readers to crave the pure milk, Peter is urging them that their logical (logiko/n) response to tasting the Lord's goodness is to seek Him all the more for spiritual nourishment.

Readers who come to 1 Peter with an eye to exploring the relationship between Christianity and culture will be rewarded. Throughout her commentary, Jobes details Peter's nuanced understanding of the church's role of accommodating, rejecting, subverting and transforming culture. Of particular note is her examination of the household codes of 2.18-3.7 in the light of first century Graeco-Roman values.

Jobes is to be commended for writing a commentary that meets the needs of the pastor preparing a sermon or Bible study and which at the same time warrants the attention of the academy. Though not as technical as the 1 Peter commentaries from Anchor Bible and Hermeneia, Jobes' 1 Peter can and should be mentioned in the same breath with John Elliott, Paul Achtemeier, Leonhard Goppelt and Ramsey Michaels.

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First Steps in Egyptian. By E. A. Wallis Budge. London: Kegan Paul, 2004, 321 pp., $85.00. Hardcover.

First Steps in Egyptian was originally published in 1895 when the study of Egyptian Hieroglyphs was still experiencing rapid development. With the aid of the Rosetta stone, Jean Champollion's made the first breakthrough in decipherment 73 years earlier in 1822, and from that point on an entire discipline was born. Among the early twentieth century Egyptologists, Budge and Breasted may be the best known—the former because of the voluminous output of his popular publications. But, even during his own lifetime, Budge was understood as lagging behind German and French scholarship, to the point that his grammatical and lexical efforts were deficient by the measurements of his day.

The distance between Budge's age and ours makes these deficiencies more acute. For example, a renovation in Egyptology occurring near the end of Budge's life was codified in Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* (Oxford University Press, 1957). And, recent achievements are refining the discipline still further.

James Allen's textbook, *Middle Egyptian* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), is fast becoming a modern classic that offers corrections to Gardiner's verbal system. Allen's book is to be much preferred as an introductory grammar over and against anything produced by Budge.

Despite the continual advances in Egyptian grammar, many of Budge's antiquated works remain in print—largely due to the fact that they are out of copyright. Dover Books has a paperback version of *First Steps in Egyptian* priced far more reasonably than the Kegan Paul production—perhaps reflecting the diminishing value of Budge. The $85.00 price-tag of this Kegan Paul version is a little perplexing, especially as free and legal electronic copies of his books are periodically showing up on the Internet.

First Steps should primarily be purchased as an Egyptian reader, as the bulk of the book is devoted to interlinear versions of 31 ancient texts (79-274). The first and smaller section of the book presents a rudimentary sign list, grammar, and dictionary. After comparing a few of the definitions to R. Faulkner's *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford University Press, 1962), I was satisfied to abandon Budge's dictionary as unreliable. In fact, pages 1-79 should be used only lightly—as the grammar and sign list are now obviously outdated.

Budge was known for his comparative and Biblical research. He properly sought to identify the linguistic ties between Egyptian and Hebrew as Egyptian is both an Asiatic and African language. A point of Semitic contact is seen in the Egyptian use of the *–t* ending to demarcate feminine nouns. But care is needed when reading Budge's Semitic identifications. In one instance he posits that the Egyptian *p* is a picture of a door and related to the Hebrew word *to open*. However, the *p* is a stool, or a mat, not a door, thus rendering a Hebrew connection as conjecture. In his ubiquitous two volume lexicon, *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary* (Dover Publications, 1978), Budge similarly identifies a great number of Hebrew and Egyptian synchronizations. There are links between the two languages, but the safer and more careful scientific handling of the subject is found in Y. Muchiki's, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic* (Scholar's Press, 1999).

To complicate matters, Budge used a unique transliteration system—one not employed in any significant manner outside of his own publications. For this reason alone, *First Steps in Egyptian* would not be the right place for someone to learn the Egyptian signs and mappings. One needs to memorize nearly 150 signs to get started in translating Egyptian—an investment that will cause anyone to want the most exact lists possible. Besides having a non-standard system of transliteration, there are deficiencies in the sign list—the least being glyphs that are assigned one value where two are possible. However, despite any negative impact this might have on the interlinear, the issue is moot when the reader makes his or her own transliterations based on Gardiner or Allen.

More problematic are several discrepancies in the Egyptian texts. Authoritative transcriptions are not preserved in *First Steps*. In "The Destruction of Mankind" (218) Budge substituted the sign for "Egyptians, mankind" for another just to supply the determinative. Other examples are more egregious.

Regardless of these shortcomings, *First Steps* is a one of a kind attempt at collecting and printing original Egyptian writings. It includes texts that will be

of great interest for Biblical studies. The speech of Amen-Ra to Thutmose (156) is a primary source for seeing how king, priest and image work in the Egyptian context. The record of the Battle of Megiddo (141) is relevant for understanding warfare, vassal states and Egyptian hegemony in Canaan. The "Destruction of Mankind" (218) is an Egyptian account of the destruction of humanity, a kind of parallel to Noah's flood. The "Hymn to Ra" (235) is an oft cited parallel to the Hebrew way of speaking of Yahweh in Psalm 104. The "Legend of the Seven Years' Famine" in Egypt (261) evokes comparisons to the Joseph story.

In Acts 7:22, Stephen recalls how Moses "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Studying original Egyptian texts will enhance one's understanding of Moses, the writings he left us, and the Egyptian born Hebrews who were led out of captivity. Budge can still direct someone along *First Steps* into an ancient culture that was the matrix of theocratic Israel—he is the one who introduced many of us to the fruitful field of Egyptology.

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Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation. By Andrew Purves. Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Publishing, 2004, 288 pp., paperback, $29.99.

Andrew Purves holds the Hugh Thomson Kerr Chair in Pastoral Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The author is an ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church USA. Purves received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Edinburgh. He earned a Th.M. from Duke Divinity School. Previous publications from Dr. Purves include *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Publishing, 2001), *Union in Christ* (Louisville: Witherspoon Press, 1999) co-authored with Mark Achtemeier, and "The Trinitarian Basis of a Christian Practical Theology" in *The International Journal of Practical Theology* (http:www.pts.edu/purvesa.html; accessed January 19, 2006).

In *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, the author presents a new model for pastoral theology in response to the clinically-based standard of the last eighty years. As noted by Purves, Seward Hiltner was the first to develop a practical theology by combining logic-centered and operative-centered models. The lamentable result has been an utterly secularized pastoral theology that is primarily psychological rather than theological; that tends towards clinical psychotherapy instead of spirituality; and that emphasizes human ingenuity as opposed to the work of God through Jesus Christ.

Dismissing the bifurcation between logic-centered and operative-centered practical theology, Purves presents a pastoral dogmatic (pastoral theology extending from classical doctrine) that offers a gospel-centered pastoral theology. The foundation for pastoral ministry is to be found in the union in Christ that is true of every believer confessing Christ as Lord. In particular, the author concentrates on the doctrine of the *homoousion* (Christ is of the same

substance as the Father, Nicene Creed, A.D. 325) and on the hypostatic union (divine and human attributes of Jesus Christ). By making Christology the center of his pastoral dogmatic, the author attempts to produce a model of pastoral care whose focus is the gospel.

In Christian history, the doctrine of the *homoousion* is the basis of Christ's divinity. All of the divine attributes of God the Father pertain to the Son as well in a communion shared with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, by way of the *homoousion*, believers share in the Trinitarian communion because of the hypostatic union of Christ's divine and human natures.

In other words, Jesus Christ becomes the Second Adam in his human side, enabling him to be our high priest. Yet Christ's priestly function operates not only in behalf of God towards humanity but also of humanity towards God. All believers' confessions, petitions, and acts of worship are translated into Jesus Christ's perfect offering before the Father. Furthermore, the fact that believers are one in Christ and Christ is one with the Father means that the Church shares in the fellowship of the Godhead. As Purves writes,

> The position for which I argue is this: first, Jesus Christ is himself both God's saving Word of address to humankind, and the human response of hearing and receiving that Word and acting in perfect obedience toward God...This dynamic twofold nature of Christ's ministry is the heuristic truth embedded within the doctrine of the hypostatic union, in which Jesus Christ is understood to be wholly God and wholly human in the union of his one personhood (45).

The first section of *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology* elucidates the theological implications of a robust Christological-focused pastoral theology. After defending the role of doctrine in pastoral care, Purves highlights why pastoral ministry is primarily the work of God through believers. Then the author unpacks the implications of Christ's priestly ministry. A discussion of the doctrine of the union of Christ follows. The doctrine of the royal priesthood is then explained, with a chapter on the eschatological implications of a Christological-focused pastoral theology concluding the first section.

The second section on ministry in union with Christ unfolds the practical implications of Purves' pastoral theology. The author examines four ministries: the Word of God, the Grace of God, God's Presence, and His reign. Each is grounded in the author's understanding of the believer's union with Christ, implying that pastoral ministry is primarily the work of Jesus Christ and that the activity of the minister is derivative of that union.

The author deserves commendation for his efforts in rebuilding pastoral theology in a modern context. His shift away from a clinical to a dogmatic focus is a move in the right direction for pastoral theology. Furthermore, an orthodox Christology should be the locus of pastoral theology. Both emphases contribute to a richer pastoral theology that emphasizes the gospel.

Yet in other ways, Purves compromises the gospel message. He presents a pastoral theology that attempts a hypostatic union of its own. On one side, Purves strives to develop a pastoral theology that is ecumenical and that

acknowledges the paleo-orthodoxy of Thomas Oden by referring to church fathers such as Gregory of Nazianzus and Athanasius (primarily in his section covering the *homoousion*). The other side is the one with difficulty. It reveals the Neo-Orthodox tendencies of the author, who was influenced by Thomas F. Torrance during his doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh.

The problem with the Neo-Orthodox emphasis in Purves is its latent christocentrism. Karl Barth (Neo-Orthodoxy's founder) shunned the immanentist theology of Schleiermacher and presented a theology so emphatic on the transcendence of God (through our union in Christ) that there is little attention given to creation. Ironically, Purves wishes to reconstruct a practical theology that is anything but practical—one that focuses on the Word of God who is behind the written Word, to its own detriment.

Furthermore, his devotion to Thomas F. Torrance results in a fatal rejection of the substitutionary atonement, replacing it with the vicarious atonement theory of John McLeod Campbell. Despite the author's attempts at church renewal and a classical emphasis on pastoral theology, this denial of a central tenet of the faith once delivered unto the saints compromises his work. This portion of Purves' pastoral theology requires revision.

The reviewer recommends *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology* with certain caveats. First, acknowledge the Neo-Orthodoxy within Purves' theology. Second, understand that Purves denies substitutionary atonement. Finally, accept that what is presented should be recognized as only a first step in reclaiming pastoral theology to its doctrinal foundations.

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