

## Book Reviews

*A Hebrew Reader for Ruth.* By Donald R. Vance. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003, x + 85 pp., \$12.95 paper.

I must confess that I feel somewhat ambivalent about *A Hebrew Reader for Ruth* and books similar to it. I am definitely in favor of works that purport to help students transition from completing introductory grammar exercises to reading the biblical text on their own. This is the stated purpose of Vance's little volume.

Books like *A Reader's Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Terry A. Armstrong, Douglas L. Busby, and Cyril F. Carr (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1980-82) and *A Lexicon for the Poetical Books* by Neal D. Williams (Irving, TX: Williams & Watrous, 1977) do this admirably well because they list only those words in each verse that occur fewer than a set number of times in the Hebrew bible (50 or fewer times for Armstrong, Busby, and Carr and less than 70 times for Williams). The Hebrew word listed is followed by a simple translation and usually frequency statistics for its use in the particular book or the entire Hebrew Bible. Armstrong, Busby, and Carr also list the relevant page where the word is found in BDB [Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907)]. Both of these texts offer a means to a more rapid reading of the Hebrew text. Neither gives a full translation of the Hebrew, and the student is able to supplement their own knowledge of the vocabulary and move quickly on.

The key, of course, is how much information the student is actually given. More than 75 years ago, A. R. S. Kennedy produced a short work entitled *The Book of Ruth: The Hebrew Text with Grammatical Notes and Vocabulary* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1928). Kennedy's purpose was also to assist beginners in the study of Hebrew. He reprinted each verse of the Hebrew text of Ruth and provided excellent grammatical notes on selected items that he considered would be confusing to the student. Forms are parsed and references are made to pertinent sections of a standard grammar of the day. A full translation is not provided and not every word is discussed. Students must also do part of the work.

Norman H. Snaith also contributed a series of small volumes of notes on several biblical books (e.g., *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Jonah* (London: Epworth Press, 1945)) designed for students reading their first Hebrew text. Snaith parses and discusses particular forms that might be difficult for the student. Occasionally, Snaith makes a reference to BDB. Again, however, not all the words in a given verse are listed, and no full translation is offered.

In my opinion, the best example of this type of Hebrew reader still in print is *The Story of Joseph: A Philological Commentary on Genesis 37; 39-47* (2nd rev. ed.) by Isaac Jerusalemi (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1968). Jerusalemi combines the best of Kennedy and Snaith, offering beginning students of Hebrew careful discussions of morphology, parsing, grammatical

charts, and cognate forms in Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic. The grammatical notes and charts alone amount almost to a full-fledged grammar of Hebrew and are well worth investing in Jerusalmi's philological commentary. But again, not all the words in a given verse are discussed or listed and no full translation is offered. The basic purpose is to facilitate learning by more rapid reading of the Hebrew text. Jerusalmi expects the students to continuously add to their basic Hebrew vocabulary as they read. Consequently, no page references are given to any Hebrew lexicon.

Unfortunately, not all Hebrew readers are that helpful. It is possible to give the student *too* much help, and it is also possible to provide the wrong kind of help. For example, the four volume *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* by J. J. Owens (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989-92) offers a list of every word in each verse with a BDB page number, a grammatical identification (parsing), and a translation. Generally, Owens simply offers the Revised Standard Version as the English translation. In a few cases, a section reference is also given to *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, edited by E. Kautzsch and translated by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910). In that all of Owens' scholarly source materials are hopelessly out of date, he provides the wrong kind of help; in that he gives everything to the student, he provides too much help. What does he leave the student to do? Everything is provided!

I am afraid that computer Bible software is moving in this direction. Morphologically tagged and parsed texts are only as good as the scholarship that is expended to create them. Students are not helped when they bring them into class because they too give everything. Students do not learn on their own to parse the form, search for the meaning, or recognize a special grammatical circumstance.

So where does Vance's *A Hebrew Reader for Ruth* fit into this paradigm? Vance is certainly to be commended, with minor reservations, for his current scholarship (see the bibliography, ix-x). In addition, the grammatical notes offered for many of the forms in Ruth are concise and clear giving the student a fine rendition of the current thinking on any particular problem of translation. A good example is found in the note on Ruth 4:1 for the rare Hebrew phrase translated "so and so" (68). His translation of each verse is neither excessively dynamic nor wooden. (Students tend to need literal translations at first, however.)

Vance follows the pattern laid out by Kennedy and Snaith. He also effectively brings Kennedy up to date. But the problem is that by giving everything he gives the student too much help. Vance reprints the Hebrew text, provides a full translation, and then lists every form in the verse. It does not help the student to list over and over again personal nouns (Boaz, Ruth, Naomi, Moab), direct object markers, prepositions, and common verbal forms ("and she said") and nouns (field). Ostensibly, the student would have acquired this type of knowledge in the first year course and should not need constant reference to it here. That is, of course, if the student did actually acquire this basic level of reading in the first year of Hebrew study. My fear is that the publication of *A Hebrew Reader of Ruth* suggests otherwise.

Vance's reader provides little challenge for the student precisely because he gives them everything. Since it does not challenge them, I will not use it as a

textbook. Unfortunately, it also effectively rules out the use of Ruth as a beginning text for my Hebrew classes. Even if I did wish to read Ruth, enterprising students would wind up finding and acquiring this book. I am afraid that the creative and investigative skill that students may exercise to find the book would stop right there because with Vance's reader there would be nothing for them to add on their own. I am also afraid that this text would encourage average students to rest on Vance's spadework and not get sweaty themselves in lexical digging. Where is the learning in this?

The workbook sheets available online are also perplexing to me. Why make the students rewrite what the textbook already gives? The idea that only the teacher should have the textbook and the students the workbook sheets negates the whole idea of a reader. Vance's work is valuable for his listing of some of the current research on various grammatical issues in Ruth. But on the whole, in my opinion, Kennedy's little book is more conducive to learning biblical Hebrew, and hence, probably more productive for beginning students.

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*Fortress Introduction to the Prophets* by Rodney R. Hutton. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004, 115 pp., \$16.00 paper.

Dr. Rodney Hutton believes, as does this reviewer, that Israel's prophets spoke about the future in order to change the present. True, the prophets did more, testifying to the sovereignty of God when they announced God's future activity. But God's spokespersons came with God's fresh and immediate word concerning what needed to be done in the present. They came at specific times, when the nation was suffering, turning away, or in love with prosperity. These men and women often expressed God's passion for His people in their personal lives, so they lived out their messages. Prophets prayed for God's people, too. Still, the premise of this little book, that Israel's prophets had to do as much with their past and present as their future is true. God's past actions reflected His purposes as would His future actions.

Dr. Hutton, a Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School, has taught at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio since 1982. He has written numerous articles, including several for the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, 1992). Among his works is a book entitled *Charisma and Authority in Israelite Society* (Augsburg/Fortress Press, 1994), a book which shows his long-standing interest in the prophets' role in Israel.

Dr. Hutton identified his audience as either those first encountering prophetic literature in a serious study or those seeking to see again the "forest" instead of the "trees" as they face weekly lectionary texts. He wrote that he wanted to help such readers by introducing the critical issues related to Israel's prophetic texts. Unfortunately, the book seems to be least helpful to the novice or the preacher who knows little of the ongoing scholarly debates. Moreover, while Hutton appreciates the work of the ancient spokespersons, readers of a more conservative perspective will notice some problematic "flags." Reference

to prophetic “legends,” Second and Third Isaiah, Second Zechariah, and the biblical historian’s “embellished” account will turn away some readers.

Unfortunately, the size of the volume under review does not give full play to Dr. Hutton’s subject. A short work such as this cannot match in scope such volumes as Joseph Blenkinsopp’s *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1996) or C. Hassell Bullock’s *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Moody Press, 1986). Worse, although this *Introduction* contains a bibliography, it has no footnotes or endnotes, leaving the reader wondering whether Hutton’s positions are conjectural or based on scholarly evidence or scholarly consensus.

A quick review of the table of contents shows Hutton’s real interest. After an introduction to Old Testament prophecy and a survey of the pre-exilic writing prophets (in chronological order), the author devotes less than ten pages each to Amos, Hosea, and Micah, and only sixteen pages to Isaiah (the so-called Jerusalem Isaiah associated with the first portion of that book). Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk are discussed as the “interim” prophets. The remainder of the volume, almost half of the book, is devoted to discussion of the person and book of Jeremiah. Even within the chapters given to a particular prophet, treatment of the prophetic book is unequal, perhaps leaning more toward modern interests than a presentation of the ancient prophet’s message.

The Minor prophets receive relatively minor treatment in this work and not always in a systematic fashion. Hutton wanted to make their message relevant to our age. Thus, he viewed Amos’s message as being concerned with how one relates worship to a life of justice and mercy. The dark tones of Amos’s preaching caused Hutton to reflect: “One can only hope that Amos’s word is a word that no generation has to endure. It is, however, a word that every generation needs to hear” (19). The author viewed Hosea’s message as addressing Israel’s apostasy, but Hutton revealed his own heart and interest when he implied that Hosea’s concern for religious infidelity was a pedantic concern (25). Except for the prophet’s social concern, Hosea would be (in Hutton’s view) socially irrelevant (24).

In the two chapters devoted to Isaiah, Hutton viewed eighth-century Isaiah’s ministry as divided into three parts: the first pre-742 B.C. before Uzziah’s death, the second connected with the 735 B.C. Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis, and the third when Isaiah came out of retirement as Hezekiah faced a crisis with the Assyrians in 705 B.C. Hutton chose to focus on the Syro-Ephraimitic Crisis and the Assyrian invasion. Discussing these two moments, Hutton saw Isaiah’s message as one of trust in God, realistic and not naive. But little is new in Hutton’s treatment of Isaiah’s work.

Micah, viewed by many as the Amos of the South because of Micah’s concern for social justice, was Hutton’s test case for “failed prophecy.” Hutton maintains that Micah 3:12, a prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction which was remembered in Jeremiah’s day and seemingly not fulfilled prior to the seventh century, was such a failed prophecy. Hutton wrote “God remains unbound even by the prophetic word, free to change the course even of the divinely spoken word. The greatest success a prophet can have is...the repentance of the people and the renewal of their relationship with God.” (47)

Hutton also seemed more concern with his own reconstruction of Manasseh's reign than the message of Zephaniah. Likewise, while providing good material on the impact of Nahum's powerful poetic imagery, the message seems discounted. Habakkuk was treated somewhat better because of famous dictum "the just shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4c). Hutton did note that this was not a recipe for how to secure eternal life (60).

Because he viewed Jeremiah as the greatest prophet in pre-exilic Israel, Hutton devoted five chapters of his work to the man and the book. The five chapters generally deal with the prophet's date, the structure of the book of Jeremiah, the person of the prophet, and the two-fold aspect of his call and ministry—plucking up and tearing down, building and planting. Here, although Hutton was careful to explain Jeremiah the prophet's historical setting, the discussion of the material seems to indicate Professor Hutton's real concern was with literary issues. He saw the depiction of Jeremiah, the historical figure, as shaped and even enhanced by a later writer. Moreover, while Hutton maintained the importance of keeping the historical Jeremiah in view, he seemed more interested in finding a threefold literary development of the book of Jeremiah (chapters 1-25, 26-35, and 37-44). When Hutton finally moved beyond literary concerns, he was able to discover and to describe four deadly themes that brought God's judgment on the nation: the loss of Israel's "pristine" holiness, Baal—the big lie, the other lie—false confidence in God, and the irrevocability of judgment. Based on the canonical shape of the book, Hutton found Jeremiah's building and planting beginning even as the sounds of demolition echoed through Jerusalem.

This volume does possess merit. Concerned with why God's agents spoke as they did, Hutton set each of the prophets firmly in that prophet's respective historical circumstances, the religious, social, and political settings which prompted a fresh word from God. Moving beyond that, Hutton encouraged modern readers to study the structure and purpose of the prophetic book as well as the prophets themselves. "Historical Micah," has interest and importance, for instance, but he may be of less importance than the final canonical shape of the book of Micah (and thus the book's message). Prophetic books were for later readers, not those who had witnessed the prophets' ministries firsthand. What additional message, beyond the prophets' immediate word, was communicated by the structuring of the prophets' preaching? The book's brevity and Hutton's positions mean this book is more helpful for someone already familiar with the prophetic books. It is not, however, an introduction for the novice or the unprepared.

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*Breaking the Da Vinci Code*. By Darrell Bock. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004, 188 pp., \$19.99. *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* By Hank Hanegraaff and Paul Maier. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2004, 81 pp., \$4.99.

Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* has sold millions of copies and has generated a great deal of discussion including several made-for-TV specials. Brown's book is an imaginative blend of conspiracy theory and a Gnostic/pagan worldview. An excellent story-teller, Brown's plot revolves around the death of the Louvre's curator and a supposed attempt by nefarious "Christians" to suppress the "hidden" truth that Jesus was actually married to Mary Magdalene. Clues to these secrets are supposedly found in Leonardo Da Vinci paintings, thus the title, *The Da Vinci Code*. Brown's novel is so fraught with historical and theological inaccuracies that it would be laughable except for the fact that the prevailing biblical illiteracy in our society makes many people susceptible to his bizarre theories. *Breaking the Da Vinci Code* by Darrell Bock and *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* by Hanegraaff and Meyer are two good responses to Dan Brown's distortion of the Gospel. I've included both books in one review because they target different audiences and serve slightly different purposes.

*The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* is a brief survey co-authored by Christian radio personality Hank Hanegraaff and ancient history professor Paul Maier of Western Michigan University. This book is divided into two parts. Part one is written by Maier and is a brief refutation of the most glaring historical and theological inaccuracies of *The Da Vinci Code*. Commenting on Brown's core premise that Jesus was married, Maier says, "Now, if there were even one spark of evidence from antiquity that Jesus even may have gotten married, I would have to weigh this evidence against the total absence of such information in either Scripture or the early Church traditions. But there is no spark—not a scintilla of evidence" (18). Part two is written by Hanegraaff and is a brief summary of why Christians believe core doctrines like the Deity of Christ and the Inspiration of Scripture.

*Breaking The Da Vinci Code* by Darrell Bock of Dallas Theological Seminary is a more detailed, comprehensive and scholarly rebuttal of Brown's claims. Bock shows that most of Brown's ideas are really borrowed from other conspiracy theorists. Most significantly, he borrows heavily from the 1982 book by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln entitled *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Doubleday). Bock distills *The Da Vinci Code* into seven different "codes" based on faulty assumptions and these serve as the outline for his book. The seven issues Bock addresses are as follows: confusion on the identity of Mary Magdalene, confusion over whether Jesus was married, the singleness of Jesus in a Jewish context, the Gnostic Gospels, development of the New Testament canon, the supposed apostleship of Mary Magdalene, and the remaining relevance of *The Da Vinci Code*. With great precision Bock dismantles Brown's novel piece by piece and exposes the numerous and fatal flaws in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Both of these books are worthy responses to Dan Brown's novel and seem to serve slightly different audiences. *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* is written in a non-technical language appropriate for a wide audience. The short length and low cost make it appropriate for mass distribution by churches who

might consider using this new challenge to the Gospel as an opportunity to share the *real* Jesus. Bock's *Breaking The Da Vinci Code* is more appropriate for pastors or laypeople who desire a more detailed analysis. One might consider reading Hanegraaff and Maier's work first. Then, if the reader desires a more detailed response, purchase Bock's book.

A film based on *The Da Vinci Code* is scheduled for release in May 2006. Christian leaders should read one or both of these books in order to have a ready response to Dan Brown's fallacious claims.

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*Translucence: Religion, the Arts, and Imagination*. Edited by Carol Gilbertson and Gregg Muilenburg. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004, xx + 220 pp., \$15.00 paper.

Early in Norman Maclean's novella, "A River Runs through It," the narrator remarks that at "sunrise everything is luminous but not clear." Such a description could be used by the authors represented in *Translucence* to approach the metaphor and central quality animating their individual essays.

*Translucence* grew from an ongoing conversation begun at a 2001 Academy of Lutheran Scholars seminar at Harvard. In the arts, and more broadly in the human imagination, the book argues, God can be perceived shining through the work, not clearly but in a necessary and edifying manner. In other words, when one is not hearing God speak in a transparent manner, one can still hear his mediated voice in Handel's *Messiah* or, presumably, Miles Davis, in Flannery O'Connor or Virgil.

Translucence, however, is not simply an alternative form of communication. It is a necessary form, allowing discourse that could not be advanced by traditional Enlightenment-inflected truth claims and logical constructions. Gregg Muilenburg, one of the volume's editors and the author of "In Praise of Subtle Thinking," traces the dichotomy between traditional philosophical-theological language and translucent communication most clearly. The "subtle thinking" that he describes is contrasted with the "precise thinking" characterizing traditional philosophical thought. While agreeing that precise thinking can be traced to the birth of philosophy, Muilenburg argues that, at least until relatively recent times, philosophy has possessed a second sort of thinking, more akin to the work of the artist than to that of the doctor. Where precise thinking is governed by the syllogism, subtle thinking has the metaphor, a term which Muilenburg defines very broadly. The central section of this essay, "A Basic Theory of Metaphor," stands as perhaps the strongest material in the collection. The metaphor, he argues, involves a radically different use of language (or other medium) about the subject, a language that simultaneously strikes the reader as true and announces its falseness. For metaphor to be effective, the reader must "get it," leading to a compulsion for paraphrase. No paraphrase of a metaphor is absolute, the reader recognizes, just as no metaphor is absolute. The Lord, after all, is not actually my shepherd, yet that metaphor and effective paraphrase of it,

can communicate theological truth on a level that the more analytic forms of systematic theology cannot reach.

The book's eight essays, presented by a diverse cast including three theologians, two English professors, two musicians, and a pastor-poet, explore the limits and ramifications of the "translucence" metaphor in various fields: the writers' individual disciplines, the individual believer's thought, and the church. Like most attempts to critique, supplement, or replace traditional scholarly discourse and thought, this book struggles between two poles. On one hand, if the writers abandon the strictures of academic communication and simply demonstrate translucence, they will not be taken seriously by the audience they most hope to affect. On the other hand, if they stand exclusively within the norms of scholarship, they undercut their own credibility, attempting to praise subtle thinking solely by use of precise thinking. It is because of this difficult position, perhaps, that the overall effect of *Translucence* is "luminous but not clear." Like the literature and music these authors champion, their work cannot be reduced to thesis statements and logical constructs.

Several of the book's essays provide not a settled answer but a domain for contemplation. Curtis L. Thompson's "Interpreting God's Translucent World" explores the interpretation of both scripture and creation in light of Luther's hermeneutics. Thompson's work, read quickly, seems to verge on pantheism. Such is not, on closer inspection, his intent, however. "The Translucent Word," the offering from the book's other editor, Carol Gilbertson, reads like a manifesto for the judicious inclusion of religious belief in the literature classroom. Gilbertson, of all the contributors, is the most successful at both infusing the translucence metaphor naturally into her work and arriving at concrete results that appreciation of translucence would effect. Karen Black's "Musical Gifts for the Worshipping Body" uses the idea of translucence coupled with the metaphor of music as a gift exchanged between God and man, to create a more expansive and spiritually rich view of worship music.

Unfortunately, however, in too many cases "luminous but not clear" effectively describes not only the idea of translucence but the individual essays as well. Kathryn Pohlmann Duffy's essay, "Discerning the Composer's Voice," appears as simply a study in historical musicology with a few paragraphs utilizing the translucence motif appended at the end.

The poetics of Martin Luther and the theology of W. H. Auden form a peculiar intersection in Bruce Heggen's "To Tell the Truth but Tell It Slant." Heggen, drawing on a sixteenth-century theologian and a twentieth-century poet (and titling his essay with a line from nineteenth-century Emily Dickinson), creates some interesting claims about the translucence of poetry. One is never clear, however, whether this essay uses Auden to speak about Luther's poetics, Luther to speak about Auden's verse, or both to say something on the nature of poetry. His essay also illustrates a shortcoming that emerges in several of the book's contributions. Their almost exclusive use of Luther as the theologian and the theorist creates a slight sense of parochialism that greater attention to other thinkers might have easily eliminated.

James Hanson's article discussing the particular glories of the aural reception of scripture, while interesting, takes a worthwhile idea, which could be amply explored in a few pages, and ruminates on it unproductively for more than thirty.

Paul Beidler's essay, "Deconstruction as Spiritual Quest," which contributes to an appreciation of the theological uses to which Derrida's work may be applied, undermines that contribution by overreaching in its claims for deconstruction. "Deconstruction is not nihilism, relativism, skepticism, or any other ism," Beidler claims toward the end of his work, a reasonable claim that he has earned in preceding pages. The essay, however, ends with an unwarranted overstatement that also closes the book: "Deconstruction is reality, since it is always already at play, and since it also structures us, it is our communion with reality. Ultimately, deconstruction is prayer."

In the end, *Translucence* does not posit a unified view of theology or warrant a Copernican shift in thinking. Its components, like the metaphor they explore, stand provisional and incomplete. This is not to deny merit to the work. Like the dawn that Maclean described, these works taken together are "luminous and not clear," yet like the Montana landscape, they command our attention. Gilbertson, Muilenburg, and their contributors deserve credit for placing before our eyes the expansive landscape that they celebrate.

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*A Genetic History of Baptist Thought.* By William Brackney. Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004. 592 pp.

In *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought*, William Brackney, Professor of Church History and Director of the Program in Baptist Studies at Baylor University, has provided his audience with a well-written and researched book depicting the various traits that encompass the Baptist genetic code. Brackney's book is divided into eleven chapters covering a broad spectrum of Baptist thought. Included among those discussed below are chapters on early Baptist pastors and writers, British Baptists, and American Baptist and Southern Baptists and their schools.

The strengths of Brackney's work are numerous. The readers will be pleased with the author's discussion of confessions of faith in chapter one. Rather than attempting to build a case for one particular group's domination of Baptist theology, he demonstrates that Baptist confessions of faith show distinct strands of Anabaptist, Puritan, and Separatist doctrines. Each of these, he claims, has left its mark in the genetic code of Baptists. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

Chapter two entitled "Singing the Faith" is also quiet strong. Rather than merely discussing Benjamin Keach and Baptist internecine struggles over the validity of hymn singing, Brackney demonstrates how hymns served as Baptist catechisms. His delineations cover not only British and American Baptists but also the importance of Black Baptist hymns to the genetic makeup of all Baptist groups.

Because Baptist historians often center on the theological significance of British and American Baptists and their contributions to the common genetic code, Brackney's chapters on "African American Baptist Traditions" (8) and

“Canadian Baptist Theological Foundations” (9) were much-needed and welcomed additions. The author points out the different theological traditions in Canada and how they are directly related to the Canadian Baptist Schools (McMaster, Acadia, and Aberhart). When dealing with the African American Baptists, Brackney takes a different approach than many of his predecessors. Rather than discussing Black theology within the framework of a distinctly Black perspective, Brackney brings to light Black Baptists who have made a theological impact on the larger Baptist community. Rightly, James Deotis Roberts takes center stage in the section.

Brackney concludes his work by listing seven of the most significant “Baptist Theological Genes in Retrospective.” These Baptist genes are a belief in the authority of Christ, the priority of the Bible, the importance of Christian experience, a modified reformed tradition, a church composed of believers, a gospel-oriented membership, and a love of freedom.

With 1,476 notes, Brackney’s work will be a blessing for researchers. Moreover, these are footnotes helpfully dispersed throughout the text, not endnotes hidden away at the back of the book. The index is concise and the bibliography is excellent.

I question, however, the author’s decision to include the chapter on “Baptist Theologians and Diaspora” (10). Without a doubt, E. J. Carnell, F. F. Bruce, and Bernard Ramm are theologians who are Baptist, but not theologians of the Baptist tradition. Their addition may have been Brackney’s attempt to broaden the ecumenical circle of Baptist theologians and theology.

In every aspect, *A Genetic History of Baptist Thought* is an excellent book. I can foresee Brackney’s work becoming the standard textbook at a myriad of Baptist colleges, universities, and seminaries. I will certainly use it as my textbook. William Brackney should be commended for his excellent work. I highly recommend this book to anyone and everyone who wants to get at the genetic threads which run through the broadest definition of what it means to be Baptist.

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*The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research.* By R. Timothy McLay. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, xiv + 207 pp., \$ 30.00 paperback.

The publication of McLay’s study is an important contribution not only to the recently growing list of tools available for Septuagint research, but, even more significantly, to the narrower and particularly barren field of studies designed to explore the use of the Septuagint (LXX) in the New Testament (NT). After a period of significant neglect, with few books published outside the Septuagint and Cognate Studies guild, the last decade has seen a much-needed reversal of the situation with the publication in English of such authoritative works as N. Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context* (ET; Leiden: Brill, 2000), M. Müller, *The First Bible of the Church* (Sheffield: SAP, 1996), M. Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scriptures* (ET; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), E. Tov,

*The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem: Simor, 1997), and most recently, K. Jobes and M. Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

McLay continues the trend set by these volumes by further exploring the use and significance of this textual tradition for NT studies. According to the author, this is the first published volume to provide “a framework for understanding how the NT writings have been influenced because of their linguistic relationship with the Greek Jewish Scriptures” (2). No one can read these studies, especially McLay’s, without a growing realization that the Septuagint can no longer be confined to its classical role of a mere handmaid to the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. McLay contends that “given the fact that the NT, like the LXX, is written in Greek and that many of the citations of Scripture in the NT agree word for word with how the passage reads in Greek, it becomes all the more likely that the Greek Jewish Scriptures were a significant influence on the NT” (4). The Septuagint, therefore, must be reckoned as a textual as well as theological tradition in its own right, and that is precisely the aim of the book and the task undertaken by McLay, known to Septuagintalists for his earlier work on the Greek versions of Daniel, *The OG and Th Versions of Daniel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996).

The book is designed to be a theoretical as well as practical guide, especially, but not exclusively, for the prospective student in the field. Following the introduction, which addresses background issues such as terminology, canon, and the current state of LXX research, there are five chapters covering the most important issues pertaining to the study of the LXX and its use in the NT. A final chapter wraps up the investigation and proposes several directions to be explored in the future. A very useful summary concludes each chapter. The book includes a glossary of terms, a fairly extensive bibliography, and indices of authors, scripture and ancient writings.

Chapter one, “The Use of Scripture in the New Testament,” is designed to take the reader through the necessary steps involved in a thorough analysis of the LXX’s use in the NT. Rather than limiting himself to presenting a mere theoretical approach, McLay chooses the use of Amos 9 in Acts 15 as a test case of the process. First, the source text of the quotation is examined in its main textual traditions, and variants are explained and checked for their semantic significance. Second, the source text of the quotation is compared with the target text in the NT, a stage which gives the author the best venue to venture into several related aspects. These aspects include explaining the differences between the NT text form of the quotation and all the other existent forms, the need to recognize the relevant sources, and the practice of the NT authors of citing and expounding the Scriptures.

Chapters two and three, “Identifying a Source as Greek or Hebrew” and “A Model of Translation Technique,” stand together as an in-depth analysis of translation technique (henceforth TT). Since the identification of the source for a quotation is a rather complex process, McLay’s study proposes an approach based on linguistic principles. He rejects as unsatisfactory an approach to TT built on the overly simplistic concept of literalism and replaces it with one established on five presuppositions. Each one of these presuppositions pertains to the nature of TT, which essentially should be descriptive, primarily

synchronic, accounting for both *Langue* and *Parole*, structural, and taking the source language as its starting point. With these presuppositions in place, a model for the analysis of TT is provided, which focuses on four cardinal issues: translation, adjustment, motivation and effect on meaning. McLay proceeds with methodological clarity and insightful practical advice, displaying all the while a competent grasp of linguistics and solid experience forged in decades of working with the Septuagint text.

Reading these two chapters, one finds in McLay a representative of the Septuagintalist school that holds to the centrality of TT for assessing the value of the LXX, both as a text and as theological legacy. Given the limits of the volume, it is not surprising that other schools of thought are given little or no consideration, particularly those who do not share McLay's confidence in the presuppositions of TT or his optimism in the result of such an approach. The reader would have benefited from McLay's engaging with those of a different persuasion, such as J. Schaper and the position he advanced in his monograph *Eschatology in the Greek Psalter* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995), one of the few significant titles that is missing from the otherwise rich and comprehensive bibliography.

In chapter four, "The Origin of the Septuagint and Its History," the historical dimension of the Septuagint as a text known for its convoluted history takes the central stage, and justifiably so. Without a proper understanding of these aspects, it would be hard to appreciate the difficulties facing a pertinent study of the LXX. In a concise *tour-de-force* of the history of the Septuagint, spanning from the original work of translating the Torah into Greek to Origen's Hexapla, McLay highlights many of the aspects that have made this field so controversial. Surviving fragmentary manuscript evidence and the bewildering maze of texts and manuscripts resulting from revisions and recensions make the study of the Septuagint one of the most complex and difficult fields of Biblical research.

The value of this information comes to practical fruition in the seven-step algorithm suggested for analyzing a citation of the OT in the NT. Step one consists of a thorough comparison between the NT and LXX texts, followed by a larger scale investigation (step two) of the evidence gleaned from other potential Greek sources, such as the versions. Step three calls for a comparison of the NT text with the Masoretic Text (MT), in order to assess the hypothesis of a causal link between a Semitic *Vorlage* and the NT text. During step four, other possible Semitic sources are to be collected and compared, with special attention given to the alternative readings. Step five proposes various explanations for the differences between all the texts surveyed and the NT text, assessing also any contextual clues that might be responsible for the differences. Step six broadens the scope of the investigation by looking at the larger theological, canonical and extra-textual factors that might have influenced the changes, while step seven sorts out the outstanding issues for which the available textual evidence are insufficient.

In the final chapter the author's discussion brings to culmination the topic of the volume, the impact of the LXX on the formation of the NT, and its use in the Early Church. There is a brief discussion about the nature of the Jewish canon in the first century A.D., an issue on which McLay favors a rather minimalist view. He assembles the evidence that allegedly contests the existence of a Hebrew

canon in the first century A.D., and consequently, of a canon of the Jewish Greek Scriptures available for the early Christian church. The author then addresses the implications of what seems to be axiomatic for his perspective, the fact that Greek Scriptures had “at least equal authority to the Hebrew Scriptures” (144). Through the examination of three cardinal issues, the influence of the LXX vocabulary on the NT, the LXX citations in the NT, and, ultimately, the LXX influence on NT theology, McLay sets out to prove that the “content of the NT is substantially different than what it would have been if the Greek translations of the Hebrew Books and other Greek Scriptures had not existed” (144). The cumulative evidence of the well-chosen examples in each of these three areas support the author’s point of view.

This reviewer, however, wonders if the issue has been sufficiently explored. Is the claim that the NT would be substantially different had the NT authors used exclusively the Hebrew Scriptures provable? Two considerations deserve to be taken into account before reaching a verdict. First, several NT authors displayed a willingness to choose whichever textual tradition best fit their argument. Second, the variety of exegetical procedures employed by the NT authors allowed them a measure of flexibility in expounding the Scriptures. Consequently, it is not always easy to decide whether the source of their exposition was a Hebrew or a Greek text. More objective criteria are needed to avoid presuming too much about what the NT authors could or could not have done with their Scriptural sources.

McLay has achieved admirably what he set out to accomplish in this useful manual. While no new ground has been broken in Septuagintal studies, the book will nonetheless put many readers in its debt for the subject matter, clarity of exposition, comprehensiveness, and practicality. To have all this valuable information between two covers is a worthy accomplishment that any prospective Septuagintalist will welcome. Whoever engages in the captivating study of the use of LXX in the NT now has the choice of either reaching to the shelf for McLay’s book, or, alternatively, perusing over at least a dozen of other books, articles and monographs, in order to compile a personal approach and methodology. McLay is to be commended for making this choice an easy one.

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*The Galatians Debate*. Edited by Mark D. Nanos. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002, lvi + 517 pp., \$34.95 cloth.

With the present volume, Hendrickson publishers are adding another very informative and useful title to their “Debate” series. The editorial work for the volume has been undertaken by Mark Nanos, well-known for his work in Pauline studies through two noteworthy monographs, *Mystery of Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996) and *Irony of Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2002). The volume gathers more than twenty relevant articles written over the last three decades on various aspects pertaining to the ongoing debate on one of Paul’s cardinal letters, the epistle to the Galatians. The editor

has cast his net wide, succeeding in coagulating a strong international panel for this debate, with the participation of some of the most representative contributors on the topic, including H. D. Betz, J. Barclay, J. D. G. Dunn, N. Dahl, A. E. Harvey, R. Jewett and J. Louis Martyn, to mention only a few.

The overall goal of the volume is “to help facilitate familiarity with the contemporary issues central to the interpretation of Galatians, the prevailing points of view as well as some recent challenges to them, and to help penetrate the specialist’s technical terminology” (xi). In order to achieve its stated goal, the editor decided to devote the book entirely to more recent developments in the scholarly dialogue, and steer away from the classical debates, many of which have allegedly galvanized attention for too long and have virtually reached a stalemate.

The articles are grouped in three areas of focused interest. Part One deals with issues of literary genre. Attention is evenly divided between two relatively recent breakthroughs in the area of genre studies, which propose two competing literary conventions against which Paul’s argument should be read. Thus, the letter could be perceived either as a rhetorical (essentially, oral) discourse, or as an epistolary (essentially, written) discourse. Part Two addresses issues pertaining to the correct construal of the autobiographical narrative in Gal 1:1-2:14—the longest such material in Pauline literary corpus—which, in turn, could be explored either with the *instrumentarium* of the rhetorical sciences or with that of the socio-historical sciences. In Part Three, the attention is devoted to the historical and religious situation in the churches of Galatia, focusing primarily not on Paul’s addressees, but on his opponents, in an attempt to draw a cohesive and realistic sketch of their intentions, interests, and message. The articles in each group are presented in chronological line, ensuring that the reader can follow the evolution of the debate and its landmark ideas and positions, an arrangement particularly helpful in those groups of articles in which the interaction between the different contributors is less than optimal.

In the Introduction, essentially a *status quaestionis* on Galatians, Nanos offers a cogent presentation of the volume, a most useful, perhaps even needed, prolegomena for the student who embarks on the reading of the upcoming 500 plus pages. He summarizes the main thrust of the articles, while providing a welcome aid in tracing down the critical issues and emphasizing their complexity and interrelatedness. This is an imperative task for a collection of articles, which, with only two exceptions, were not originally written as part of this compendium. The volume includes a useful glossary, lists of scriptural, name and topic indices, and ends with a very extensive bibliography.

For this reviewer, the goal set for the volume has been thoroughly achieved, not least when one considers the constraints of the editorial work for the selection of both the contributors and the issues addressed. As far as the former is concerned, it would be difficult to think of a more qualified and diverse list of contributors. Yet, even with this excellent selection, some readers might regret that the voices of some long-standing participants to the Galatians debate, such as those of N. T. Wright or Richard Hays, have not joined in the forum. More susceptible to criticism, however, is the editor’s choice of topics selected to stimulate the dialogue; perhaps not so much with regard to what has been included in the volume, but rather with what has been left out. The reader might

well wonder whether the narrow topical focus of the volume does indeed full justice to the complexity of the issues worthy of discussion in a “Galatians Debate” volume. As any of the Pauline epistles, Galatians is replete with many exegetical conundrums and intricate theological issues, which deserve a fresh and robust analysis. Including one or two such issues in the debate would have strengthened the theological component of the volume, and would have enhanced the overall value of this prolegomenon to Galatians’ studies.

In all fairness to the editor, no selection can or will ever satisfy completely. Within the confines of the present choices, however, the reader of this volume can be confident that he holds a very judicious and unique premier in the study of the letter and historical situation of the epistle. I can think of no other volume that could provide a better tour-de-force of the recent scholarly debate, especially regarding the literary aspects, the socio-historical and religious backgrounds, of what will continue to be a much loved and studied epistle.

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*How Jewish is Christianity?: Two Views on the Messianic Movement.* Edited by Louis Goldberg and Stanley N. Gundry. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003, 192 pp., \$16.99.

The essays and articles in *How Jewish is Christianity?* were written by a number of authors: William Varner, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, David H. Stern, John Fischer, and Gershon Nerel. The introduction to this book, written by Louis Goldberg (editor), gives a clear and concise overview of how Messianic congregations appeared, disappeared, and reappeared. The remainder of the book is organized in two major sections: the first section discusses the unnecessary existence of Messianic congregations, and the second section discusses the permissible existence of Messianic congregations as long as they act in accordance with the New Testament. In both of the sections one author contributes his stance on a topic. The chapters thereafter are then responses to the first stance. Now that a clear foundation for the book has been laid, each of the chapters can be analyzed accordingly.

The introduction was quite necessary, for who can understand different views of the topic if they are not properly educated? Goldberg brings up important eras of the Messianic movement. He cites the first through fifth centuries as the centuries with the most widespread introduction into the Judeo-Christian culture, spread primarily by the apostle Paul. Later, persecution and massacres were the ultimate causes for the dissolution of the Messianic congregations. Goldberg said many Jews had to “renounce all ties with Judaism and accept wholeheartedly an identity with Christianity in all its facets” (20). New believers were also given new “Christian” names so that people could differentiate between Jews and their converted peers. However, the Renaissance and the Reformation led to the ultimate emancipation of the Jewish people and the general public began changing their attitudes toward them. Today, the

number of Jewish believers compares with the number of Jewish believers in the first century.

In the first section, Varner gives his opinion about Messianic congregations: that they are in fact not necessary this side of the cross. He writes from the perspective of a Gentile, yet a scholar of Judaism. He claims he only aims to rebuke in love, as he quotes Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (31). Varner inserts multiple quotes from David Baron, a former orthodox Jew now converted to Christianity. He says, "The New Testament nowhere tells the Gentile believer that he is 'free' from anything from which the Jewish believer is not freed" (34). His reason for quoting so much of Baron's work is to draw attention to the law-keeping tendencies of Jewish believers. Varner also states that Paul actually refers to his Jewishness as in the past, not present. Paul finds his identity in Christ, and not his Jewishness. He furthermore argues that any characteristics that divide us are dissolved when we come to the Lord. Another one of his arguments is that the congregations tend to emphasize the shadow of the Old Testament as opposed to the reality of the New Testament. His closing remarks signal his tendency to separate culture from worship, putting Christ as the center of fellowship, but culture as irrelevant.

The second section written by John Fischer gives a stark contrast to Varner's exposition. Fischer says it is necessary to have Messianic congregations. His point is that messianic congregations actually better mimic the first churches because of their unity of believers. He argues that there are actually Jewish and non-Jewish members represented in most Messianic congregations. In rebuttal to the shadow comment that Varner made, he cites R. Alan Cole saying, "...a shadow cannot highlight anyone, even the Messiah, if it is totally removed from the picture" (55). Fischer also argues that the apostle Paul actually still participated in Judaism. Another concern Fischer raises is that Varner suggests there is some way to worship that is culture-neutral. To illustrate his point, he uses other ethnic congregations and the variances of worship styles found within. Fischer also notes "the clarity and the centrality of Yeshua and his message" within Messianic synagogues (65).

The next section, written by Fruchtenbaum, cautions Varner not to discount all Messianic congregations because of a few unbiblical types of congregations. He lists several points of agreement with Varner, such as the idea that Paul actually wrote about his past when referring to his Jewishness. The slight area of disagreement is in the fact that Paul did not mean ordinances (such as the Lord's supper) are rubbish, but only when compared to knowing Christ, which is far greater. He also believes that the Old Testament law is no longer mandatory. However, his points of disagreement are that he believes Varner's "brush is too broad" (72), blanketing all Messianic congregations under one category, and that Messianic congregations are dangerously adding to the Word of God. Fischer states, "If [traditions] are not mandatory, and if they do not violate New Testament revelation, then they become a valid option" (77).

Goldberg writes the next section in response to Varner. Goldberg believes that contextualization is the key to heart-felt worship. He says, "...most missiologists today not only allow but insist that believers within each country or within each cultural expression have the right to contextualize their faith and lifestyle in accordance with their cultural background, as long as no basic

biblical doctrine or teaching of Yeshua is ever twisted” (80). Goldberg says that the message is still the same, but the context is what is different. According to Goldberg, the Jewish believer can still behave biblically in regard to practices.

The next section, written by Nerel, states that it is imperative that we have Messianic Jewish congregations. He states that most Jewish believers share the vision of becoming just as Jewish as Jesus and his disciples. He is, however, against the practice of outwardly dressing Jewish in order to be accepted by the mainstream Jews. In fact, he goes so far as to say Jewish believers should embrace the fact that the High Court of Justice considers them ex-Jews due to their overt belief in the Messiah. They should, conversely, consider this biblical term for themselves: “Disciples of Yeshua.” Nerel also uses the analogy of women and men meeting in the same church as one body to illustrate a point about Jews and Gentiles meeting in the same church as one body. He states, “...it is natural to distinguish between Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua” (102). He believes it is the Jewish believers’ calling to remind the Gentiles about their Jewish roots in Jesus and to read scripture in light of those roots. It is Nerel’s personal belief that believers should neither “Gentilize” nor “Judaize” others. He says, “Conversion to ‘Judaism’ by circumcision or any other external practices should be fully rejected. Similarly, [Jewish Yeshua-Believers] should not be gentilized by denying their right to corporately observe the God-given—not rabbinical—customs of the Jewish people” (105). He believes the two congregations should work alongside each other in order to influence each other for the better.

Moving along to the second section, Fruchtenbaum writes about the function of the Messianic congregations complimentary to the New Testament. He states that new faith does not change one’s ethnicity and Jews and Gentiles make up one body of Christ. Therefore, the body of Christ has Jews within it and they will worship Christ differently than Gentiles. He also lists a series of problems within the churches in regard to their attitude toward Jewish believers. Along with the problems, he lists a series of solutions that counteract these problems. In addition to this advice on how to solve the problems that arise in the local church, Fruchtenbaum offers the foundations of Messianic congregations. He discusses the role of Mosaic Law, rabbis, ritual observances, and a way to apply them to a Messianic congregation. He also states that he is part of a Messianic congregation that shows a real sign of maturity in that they allow great freedom for the members to practice to what extent they choose. Some choose to wear a tallitot; others do not. Some choose to refer to Jesus as Yeshua; others refer to him as Jehovah.

In the next chapter, Fischer responds to Fruchtenbaum’s thesis. For the most part, Fischer agrees with Fruchtenbaum. He addresses many of the same issues, but raises an eyebrow where the area of Mosaic Law is concerned. To Fischer, the issue is not as “clear-cut” (130). He sees many loopholes in the interpretation of Scripture. He says, “...the new covenant ratifies the Mosaic covenant; it does *not* replace it” (132). He camps out on this issue, and that of the Law of Christ for a matter of pages. In conclusion, he stresses the importance of having Messianic congregations in our world today.

Next, Goldberg writes a chapter in response to Fruchtenbaum. His concern is that Jewish believers should determine how much of the traditions of Judaism

should be appropriated today. He goes on to state what these traditions are in an attempt to weed out the ones that are not necessary in light of the ones that are essential. He picks out different topics, such as the Mosaic Law, worship, identity in regard to other believers who are not Jewish, and the oral law.

The next chapter was written by Nerel. In this chapter, he argues that many Jewish believers choose to ignore the teachings in the Old Testament, namely the oral law, in relationship to the teaching in the New Testament. In Nerel's opinion, one should survey the words of Christ as opposed to the words of Paul in order to verify the validity of the Torah. He also emphasizes the need to focus on Christ as being the validation of the Torah in an authoritative way. Nerel also addresses a different theme—the function of the rabbinical institutions. He also addresses the act of circumcision, observing the Sabbath, eating kosher meals, and observing Jewish festivals, and whether or not it is biblical for Jewish believers to follow through with these ordinances. In both of these topics, Nerel's overlying theme is that these ordinances or practices must be seen as optional and not prerequisites for the act of salvation. They should, however, be “understood and implemented by [Jewish believers in Yeshua] through the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (164).

Varner's section is next with the fourth question (one that he would add to Fruchtenbaum's list of three), which is “*Should* there even be Messianic congregations?” He demonstrated the weakness in the cultural argument of Judaism. Because Fruchtenbaum claimed it is another ethnic group, Varner opposes this view and says that since they do not speak their own language, and since their cultural group is many times American by heart, this argument for the Jewish believers being a cultural group is weak. His other concern in this section is regarding the identity of Jewish believers—that the believer is actually adding to his identity in Christ by becoming Jewish. This could be dangerous territory since it could lead to a belief in Christ's insufficiency.

David H. Stern writes the very last chapter. The topic of this section is the future of Messianic Judaism. He applauds the efforts that have been made and urges for the Messianic congregations to press on, not allowing each other to settle into a comfort zone. He also lists six goals that the congregation should be pressing toward: seeking emotional healing, defining and pursuing community, developing a proper expression of Jewishness, engaging in evangelism, preparing for the land of Israel to become the center of Messianic Judaism, refining our theology so as to help end the schism between the body of Messiah and the Jewish people.

For the most part, I was pleased by the variety and explanation of viewpoints offered. I first saw the book and thought it would be only two views of Messianic Judaism. However, when I read through the whole book, I discovered there are really several different views within the book. No two contributors said exactly the same thing in their expositions. On the one hand, I think this fact illustrates the beauty in diversity. Just whenever I would come to an agreement with someone on an issue, I would turn the page and a new section would start, causing me to question everything I had once read and thought was truth. This examination demonstrated to me how many different, viable ways people can interpret the same scripture.

On the other hand, I found myself thinking that the authors should have displayed much more exegesis when explaining their different viewpoints. Several New Testament books address Jewish-Gentile tensions in the early church (Ephesians, Romans, Galatians, etc.), and yet the authors did not go into very much depth with them. Thorough exegesis of passages within particular NT books would likely have made one viewpoint more convincing than the others.

A few statements in the book were disconcerting to me as well. One of those statements is on page 115. Fruchtenbaum writes, “The primary purpose [of a Messianic congregation] should not be for the sake of the unbelieving Jewish community but for the sake of the Messianic Jewish community.” When I first read those words, I thought he was going to say, “but for the sake of God’s name and glory only.” I was distressed to read at the end of that sentence that he believes the primary purpose of having a Messianic congregation is for the Messianic Jewish community. He does not stop there, either. When he addresses the issue of why Messianic Jewish congregations exist, he says “We do this for our own benefit . . .” (116). Statements like these disturbed me as I thought about what the primary focus and purpose for a church should be. We should be focused specifically upon Christ and carrying out his Great Commission and not be concerned so much about ourselves. Fruchtenbaum’s statements suggested to me otherwise.

The book provided useful information on a question that is being asked by more and more Christians. Despite the book’s few shortcomings I would recommend it to anyone wanting to know more about this subject.

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*An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation.* By David A. deSilva. Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press, 2004, 975 pp., \$40.00 hardcover.

Within the crowded niche of New Testament introductions one might ask why deSilva has invested his scholarly time and effort here. He answers this query by stating the need for a thorough NT introduction which takes up both the devotional/ministerial and academic contexts within which the NT is read. “This introduction,” deSilva asserts, “seeks to nurture this kind of integrated approach to Scripture, attending both to the methods and results of academic and critical study of the New Testament as well as to the ways that these texts continue to speak a word from the Lord about discipleship, community and ministry” (20). To this end *An Introduction to the New Testament* takes on the Herculean task of not only providing an introduction to the history, culture, literature, and theology of the NT documents but also offering an overview of a variety of critical methodologies while considering how these texts are taken up in the ministry to God’s people.

One must acknowledge that deSilva’s framework for structuring all he is to say by way of introduction to the NT is fitted by Vernon K. Robbins’ “socio-rhetorical” approach. His states his apology for this hermeneutic especially for

those involved in Christian ministry “since the goal of socio-rhetorical interpretation is to enter as fully as possible into how a text works to persuade its hearers at every level, using a great variety of resources, and to nurture and sustain Christian community in the face of the exigencies of a particular situation” (23). Further evidence of deSilva’s debt to Robbins may be found in his index of exegetical skills which is annotated according to the different facets of the “socio-rhetorical” approach (27).

After an opening chapter briefly considering the pastoral nature and formation of the NT (“The New Testament as Pastoral Response”), chapters 2-3 (“The Environment of Early Christianity: *Essential Landmarks*,” and “The Culture and Social World of the Early Church: *Purity, Honor, Patronage and Kinship*”) situate the documents of the NT historically and socially. While providing a clear historical timeline of major social, political and religious developments of the intertestamental period, deSilva provides his readers with the particular service of considering both the Greco-Roman and Jewish backgrounds of the NT. Interspersed throughout this section he also includes short introductions to specific bodies of literature, namely the Septuagint, the Old Testament Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and later Gnostic texts. The third chapter is largely an abridgment of deSilva’s *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press, 2000), where he broaches the particular set of cultural values of the first-century, including the “socially conditioned” ways of viewing the world and how individuals relate within them.

The rest of the text directly considers the NT with critical issues rather than canon dictating the order in which books are considered. In chapter 4 deSilva introduces several issues relevant to the study of the gospels (“The Four Gospels and the One Jesus: *Critical Issues in the Study of the Gospels*). Here we find surprisingly up-to-date discussions regarding gospel genre (*bios, vita*), historical Jesus research, oral tradition behind the gospel material, the literary relationship between the gospels and helpful definition and assessment of form and source criticism. From here Mark is the first gospel taken up (chapter 5) then Matthew through Acts (chapters 6-8). He then considers the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles in successive chapters (9-10). Chapter 11 (“A Prologue to the Study of Paul’s Letters”) serves as an introduction to Paul’s life history and its relationship with Acts, after which deSilva considers the Pauline corpus in chronological order (chapters 12-19). Chapters 20-24 take up the rest of the NT roughly in canonical order with the exception of Jude and 2 Peter being taken together (chapter 23).

Each chapter directly addressing a NT text follows the same basic outline. First, deSilva surveys the historical and pastoral context of the document, which at times includes issues of audience, genre, and structure. Second, the message or persuasive intent of each text is probed. Here the rhetorical flow of the text is analyzed topically for the salient points each author is attempting to communicate. Third, interspersed throughout each chapter are different “Exegetical Skill” sections which take up a particular exegetical method and, via step-by-step instructions, applies it to the text at hand. This is clearly one of the most useful features of the text. And finally, at the end of each chapter deSilva offers his reflection over how that particular book may be used in ministry

formation. Another feature of these chapters is the frequent use of text-boxes and helpful diagrams and pictures taking up specific issues appropriate to the text under discussion. For example, in his discussion of Mark's audience deSilva examines the new proposal of R. Bauckham regarding the scope of the gospels' first audiences ("Who Was the Evangelist's Audience?", 197) or, while discussing Galatians, he offers additional information regarding "The 'New Perspective' on Paul and Early Judaism" (500-501) and "Criticisms of the 'New Perspective'" (518-19). These side notes effectively introduce current critical issues while maintaining the basic flow of the narrative. And both within each aside, and at the end of each chapter he offers essential and up-to-date bibliography for further reading on the particular critical issue or book.

In a very crowded market deSilva provides a uniquely integrated approach to NT introduction which will be appreciated for its critical engagement and pastoral sensitivity. This volume is quite readable as it deals with vast areas of scholarship with judicious efficiency. Though at times there is evidence it was rushed through the editorial process (e.g. increasing typos in the latter parts of the book and James 1:26-27 missing from deSilva's outline, see 820) the text is well structured and aesthetically pleasing with different fonts for asides and additional information and distinctive shading for the "Exegetical Skill" sections. DeSilva, as a seasoned instructor, invites the reader into his classroom in this valuable text, bringing together historical and cultural awareness while taking up and introducing a number of methodological strategies all with a minister in mind. This work will be particularly helpful for seminary students and pastors needing a solid introduction to NT which takes into account both critical and ministerial issues.

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*Awakening: The Life and Ministry of Robert Murray McCheyne.* By David Robertson. Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster/Authentic Media 2004, 201 pp., paper.

I suspect this relatively small book may well be overlooked by many, as it looks like an average paperback of no particular value, having a dull, light brown cover with no portrait of the subject. Instead, the cover contains simply a picture of a bridge over lots of water. Such a result would be a real tragedy, for the subject of this small book was one of the godliest men that was ever raised up in the days of revival in nineteenth century Scotland. Robert Murray McCheyne was surely one of Scotland's greatest and most influential preachers, one who showed his devotion to Christ through his personal walk with his Lord, his preaching and study of the Bible, and his pastoral care and concern for people.

But do not be misled, Robertson's work is much more than simply an historical biography, for McCheyne's published and private papers would teach us many valuable lessons for today. What I see as particularly valuable about this twenty chapter volume, is that it is not written by someone with maybe just a passing interest in McCheyne, but by the present minister of McCheyne's own

church, St Peter's. And that is something remarkable in itself, that the site of so much of the outpouring of God's Spirit in the past, is now being led by another evangelical, seeking to give God the glory and to make Him and His salvation known once again.

At this point I would declare a personal interest, in that I have recently published three volumes of previously unpublished sermons from McCheyne, and so know firsthand, something of the challenge that McCheyne's words bring even today. That is not to say that Baptists would agree with everything that McCheyne believed. We would take issue for example, with his position on baptism, but there is no denying his challenge to us in so many other areas: a commitment to missions and evangelism; the practice and discipline of journal keeping; a passion and zeal for the things of God; a life drenched in prayer; and last but not least, the holiness of a life lived before a holy and sin-hating God. McCheyne is not a figure to become acquainted with lightly, for he will as he always did, challenge God's people to be what God called them to be, salt and light. I do not believe it's a coincidence, that the Church planted in the past by St Peter's, was recently sold due to lack of a viable congregation to a Muslim businessman.

If you are looking for a book to challenge you in your walk with Christ, read this volume (together with McCheyne's *Memoir and Remains*, edited by Andrew Bonar, which is constantly reprinted by Banner of Truth). If you are looking for a book to encourage church planting, then use this book too, for there is so much valuable material on that subject. Robertson tells us for example, that his view of church planting was that God would send the showers and the churches were the cisterns to collect the rain. In fact, McCheyne oversaw the establishing of more than 180 new churches.

If you are interested in a book that will make the case for how theology and ministry must go together, then this too is that book. As Robertson explains, it was McCheyne's theology that shaped his ministry and his character. Theology for McCheyne was the study of God, and McCheyne was absorbed by Jesus. McCheyne recounts his own days in the University classroom and the impact one of his professors had on him, namely the renowned Pastor-teacher and theologian Thomas Chalmers, whose aim was to inspire and motivate, as well as inform. What lessons there are in that for those of us who would stand in tradition of Chalmers today! If you are seeking a book that also speaks of the importance of the Biblical languages in reading and preaching Scripture, then that too is here. For example, in his notebook of 1837, it records that he was studying and making exegetical comments on at least 20 verses in Hebrew every day.

Another area in which this book has proved to be of immense value, was recounting McCheyne's thoughts of, and role in, the Disruption. The Disruption occurred in 1843, when the evangelical ministers of the Church of Scotland could no longer accept the direction of the liberals within the Church, and who following Chalmers, physically and determinedly walked out on their beloved Church (a move which included forfeiting home and income), to found a new, evangelical Free Church of Scotland. McCheyne would speak to us therefore, of the need to stand for truth even when it may cost so much, but which to not to would cost so much more. There are so many parallels between the stand of the

evangelicals of McCheyne's day and the conservative resurgence which took place in the SBC. There is much to ponder on in this area too in Robertson's work.

There are some mistakes in the book, such as the mistaken spelling of Edward Irving's name on page 28. The date 1936 on page 63 should read 1836. Finally, on page 146, the Roman numerals from McCheyne's gravestone are incorrectly printed as MDCCCXILIII, instead of MDCCCXLIII.

Each of the twenty chapters is concluded with very helpful questions for meditation. I would suggest that they could as equally be valuable as questions for group discussions. Robertson is well aware of the high regard that many have for McCheyne's memory, and the danger is that some make McCheyne the equivalent of a Protestant saint, something Robertson himself says "often happens" (158). But the author would have his readers know, that in writing and researching his book, he has not only been, "provoked, amused, challenged, delighted, stimulated and deeply moved" (158), but that his thoughts have also been, "drawn less and less to McCheyne and more and more on the sheer glory, wonder, grace and love of Jesus Christ. That is of course what McCheyne would have wanted. It is also my desire for you" (159).

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*Dictionary of Baptists in America.* Edited by Bill J. Leonard. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994, 298 pp., \$20.00.

One may wonder why a book that was published in 1994, even as important as a dictionary of Baptists in America might be, which has not been revised, would still be reviewed in a Journal in the 21st Century. The reason is that the way the book was presented in advertising, made it seem to appear that it was indeed a new edition, sadly this was not the case. In fact, it seems somewhat remarkable that a dictionary that deals with a body as disparate and ever-changing as the Baptists in America have been, has not been revised—especially with all the fundamental changes that have taken place within the Southern Baptist Convention in the decade since the book originally appeared. Part of the argument of this review is that such a new volume is particularly needed, for as the cover of the original volume itself says, this dictionary has hundreds of articles on, "contemporary developments, movements and organizations." As this volume has enjoyed a fairly wide readership, it was felt useful to proceed with a constructively-critical review in the hope that the present volume's approach might be better understood, and that someone might be encouraged to take on the task of creating a more up to date volume.

The editor, Bill Leonard is a well-known figure within Baptist life in America. An author of at least 14 books, including a forthcoming volume, *Baptists in America*, Leonard is dean and professor of church history at Wake Forest Divinity School, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. His dictionary contains 650 articles by more than 100 contributors which seek to explain or define significant issues, events, figures, movements, institutions and groups with

connections to Baptist life in America. Leonard begins with an introductory essay, 'The Baptists: A People, a History, and an Identity', in which he provides an introductory insight into the origins, beliefs, and practices of Baptists in America. Then follow the articles, which range in length from a short paragraph to several pages.

It should not take long for the average reader to appreciate that there is clear bias in the theological approach contained within this volume. One example would be the article on Broadman Press, where it mentions briefly Broadman's publishing of Ralph Elliott's *The Message of Genesis* (1961). When referring to the content of Elliott's controversial volume, the article here speaks of the book's "alleged liberal content" (65). In addition, the article on the Inerrancy Controversy would be seen by many as particularly biased. At the same time, however, it would only be right to mention that there are articles by such conservative figures as Timothy George and Tom Nettles, but they are clearly in the minority.

There are examples of particularly well-written articles, the ones on Isaac Backus and Roger Williams are particularly memorable. But what was a little puzzling was the inclusion of articles on John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, both early *English* Baptist leaders. One surmises that they are present for the significant part they played in early Baptist development worldwide. There was disappointment at the absence of articles dealing with J.M. Carroll's *Trail of Blood* (1931) and with Ralph Elliott, as previously mentioned. Other minor disappointments included the lack of detail in the article dealing with the significant figure in Southern Baptist life, Isaac Tichenor; and that there was no mention of Spurgeon's library now being housed at William Jewell College, Missouri, in the article on William Jewell College.

As for justifications for the necessity of an updated volume, the following are simply examples that are pertinent to Southern Baptist interest: the fact that the Baptist Faith and Message has been revised, and the implications that stem from that for Baptists; the further developments that have taken place within the Seminaries; the creation of institutions such as Truett Seminary at Baylor University; the fact that several SBC agencies are now defunct, including the Historical Commission; the lack of articles on significant figures within recent Southern Baptist history whose inclusion must be valid no matter one's theological outlook, especially individuals such as Paige Patterson and Al Mohler. And finally, the fact that while there is an article by W.R. Estep on the theological Journal published by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, no such article exists concerning the Journal published by Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in which this very review appears.

Even with all the caveats and criticisms that have hereto been made, the dictionary does still have much of value. For example, it introduces or reminds one of the sheer varieties of American Baptist bodies that have existed, or still do. Bodies such as the Western Baptist Convention, which lasted for only 9 years in the 1830s; Union Baptists, which consist of only 34 churches; the National Southern Baptist Charismatic Conference, which is not viewed too positively by the majority of Southern Baptists; and the National Baptist Evangelical Life and Soul-Saving Assembly of the United States of America, which is defined as an African-American evangelical organization and splinter

group of the National Baptist Convention of America. It also introduces or reminds one of the incredible number of Baptist institutions of education that have or still exist, testimony to the fact that Baptists have always usually had a high regard for education, whether it be in the form of schools, colleges, institutions, seminaries or universities. Examples include Adelpia College, WA; American Baptist Seminary of the West, CA; Baylor University, TX; California Baptist College, CA; Dallas Baptist University, TX; Virginia Interment College, VA; Vermont Academy, VT; Wake Forest University, NC; and William Jewell College, MO.

The *Dictionary of Baptists in America* has little real competition. Volumes dealing with Baptist history are few, and so this present work will probably remain a staple for many until a more fair and balanced and up-to-date volume is written.

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*Sinners in the Hands of a Good God: Reconciling Divine Judgment and Mercy.* By David Clotfelter. Chicago: Moody Publishers 2004, 296 pp., \$18.99 paper.

On his afternoon radio show on December 12, 2004, host Bill O'Reilly had the opportunity to respond to one caller's position that it was vital for high-school students to be taught about the significant impact Christians had on the history and development of early America, especially Christian leaders such as Jonathan Edwards. O'Reilly stated that while he was in general agreement with the caller's argument, he would not encourage anyone to study Jonathan Edwards for he was a fanatic who preached a destructive Christianity. Sadly, there was no further explanation of how he came to such a conclusion.

One wonders if O'Reilly, like millions of others, had been introduced to Edwards solely through the very narrow window of one particular sermon he preached at Enfield in July 1741. For it is that sermon, 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God', that creates the idea in the minds of many, that the outlook of Edwards was singularly narrow, cruel and hell-bent. This is a massive tragedy, for such a representation is obviously only a caricature. The context of 'that' sermon, is that Edwards regarded the congregation at Enfield as particularly hard-hearted and in such a need of awakening, that he crafted this particular message for them. This is not to say however, that the sermon's themes of the gravity of sin, the wrath of a holy God, and the certainty but unexpectedness of judgment, were not integral to Edwards's theology, for they most certainly were, but it is not the whole picture by any means.

All the above has mainly been said in order to put David Clotfelter's book *Sinners in the Hands of a Good God: Reconciling Divine Judgment and Mercy* into some kind of context. The title of his book is obviously a play on the title of Edwards's sermon already mentioned, a sermon which has become probably the most infamous sermon in the history of American preaching. Using that as his starting point, the author tells us that the aim of his book is to consider such questions as whether there is an eternal hell; how a good God could send people

there and leave them there; whether or not God has the power and goodness to save everyone; and why He doesn't do it? These are obviously not new questions, and in that sense, these are not new themes and issues the author is tackling, but that doesn't make this book any the less valuable. For this work is the record of one man's struggle to attempt to understand Divine truths, his wrestling to reconcile the doctrines of God's justice with his mercy. Many have walked that path and many will still, and I believe this book could be of real value to both.

The first part of the book defends the truth of eternal punishment against the theories of universalism and annihilationism. Part two defends the doctrine of election against some opposing views. The third part of the book examines the meaning of the Cross in the light of man's guilt and God's sovereignty. In the final chapter, Clotfelter attempts to draw together all the threads of the discussion.

One might ask the question, that while the author discusses many thinkers in this book, why the names of George McDonald and Jonathan Edwards are especially prominent? The answer is that Clotfelter desperately wanted McDonald to be right. He wanted to believe for example, just as McDonald did, that because a good and loving father would never condemn his children to endless punishment, then neither would a heavenly Father. But the author tells us he soon ran into trouble, for as much as he liked McDonald's view of God, he soon discovered that it didn't match up with Scripture. "I wanted him to be right," says Clotfelter on page 16, "I wanted it so badly." But after a lot of turmoil he laid aside the sermons of McDonald and turned to the Bible, and then to the task of trying to make sense of God's justice. It was in that task he tells his readers, that it was the writings of Jonathan Edwards of all people, who was of the most help: the clarity of thought he brought to Clotfelter's questions, and Edwards's tenacity in following the Bible's teaching.

Any honest, theological attempt to understand, much less reconcile God's justice and his mercy, will by necessity have to deal with and confront many complex issues, as Clotfelter himself appreciates in the preliminary questions he raises. That fact alone, could have led to a book that is academically unconnected from real life, tedious, and of little spiritual value.

Thankfully, that is not the case here. The book is both very challenging and very encouraging. The author gives two main reasons why he has written this book: to help people who, like himself, find the biblical presentation of divine justice difficult to understand or accept; and the second is to promote and encourage revival, by encouraging pastors and preachers to examine the content of their messages, "to make sure that the message we are preaching is really the gospel."

I don't personally believe there could be any greater reasons. He reminds his readers that conferences have been attended, churches have been marketed, tongues have been spoken, self-proclaimed prophets have been listened to, signs and wonders have been pursued, worship styles have been changed, the art of communication has been studied, sermons have been well crafted, drama and multimedia presentations have been incorporated into worship, but still revival has not come.

This valuable book should act as a wake-up call to Christian leaders. For it is very true that there are doctrines that offend, and too often they are not being preached for fear we'll drive people away. But what this book would remind us is that so often in the modern Church God's hatred of sin doesn't pierce us, his wrath does not terrify us, and his sovereignty does not humble us. So instead of preaching strong doctrine, powerfully presented and closely applied, many only give tips for successful living, and we continue to hope, "that somehow, by means of some new insight or book or technique, we will 'release' God's power for revival"(19).

This is not a book for the easily offended. Nor is it, says the author, for professional theologians; it is for the ordinary believer. In one sense, I would very much disagree. This is a book for all believers. I would have liked to have known more about the author of the book. We do learn from the acknowledgements that he is the Pastor of the Chinese Christian Alliance Church, but disappointingly we're not told much more. From other sources one discovers that the author has degrees from Yale and Fuller, a Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School, and that the Church he pastors is in Northridge, California. One especially nice touch in the book, and maybe a little unusual in a book covering such themes, are the inclusion of prayers at the end of each chapter. The author says they are to emphasize the truth that the study of theology, and especially the study of the issues contained in this book, should never be undertaken without prayer.

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