



JONAH: A NEW TRANSLATION WITH INTRODUCTION, COMMENTARY, AND INTERPRETATION, by Jack M. Sasson. The Anchor Bible, Vol. 24B. New York: Doubleday, 1990. Pp. 384. \$28.00.

“There is,” writes Professor Sasson in his Preface, “an enormous curiosity about this book.” In view of that curiosity, says Sasson, “I have had to devote much space to establishing what the book of Jonah says, what ancient translators understood it to say, and what contemporary authorities think it should say” (x). The result is the most extensive commentary now available on the book of Jonah.

The first twenty-five pages deal with introductory matters. The author begins with an informative discussion on texts of Jonah in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic. While not denying that Jonah could be made up of elements coming from a variety of sources, Sasson considers the book in its present form as a unity: “it is difficult to deny that Jonah does ‘work’ as an integrated story” (19). He offers thorough discussion of the date for the book’s composition, concluding that “a final editing or composing of Jonah took place during the exilic, but more likely during the postexilic, period. At the same time, however, I acknowledge how little this admission contributes to a fuller understanding of this particular book” (27). A last section comments on the liturgical use of Jonah, in connection with Yom Kippur in Judaism and with the lectionary cycles of Christian churches. The book contains the most up-to-date and complete bibliography on Jonah available anywhere, with thirty-two pages listing works in a variety of languages and from a variety of disciplines. In addition to the usual treatments from Old Testament specialists, Sasson includes works ranging from *Moby Dick* to *Ships and Fleets of the Ancient Mediterranean* and “Sleep: An Aspect of Jewish Anthropology.” Sasson does not include Luther’s commentary on Jonah (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 19 [St. Louis: Concordia, 1974]) though he refers to Luther’s views on Jonah secondarily (150, 244); to his list should be added the important article by H. Gese, “Jona ben Amittai und das Jonabuch” (*Theologische Beiträge* 16/6 [1985]).

The major part of the book consists of some 258 pages of “Notes and Comments” following the format of the Anchor Bible series. The Notes for each section deal with textual, linguistic, and philological issues. In the Comments, says Sasson, “I translate the results of my philological inspections into readable prose. I also engage the narrator on how characters are made to behave and how events are plotted” (xii). The Jonah book is divided into eleven sections: The Setting (1:1-3), The Storm-Tossed Ship (1:4-6), The Singling Out of Jonah (1:7-12), Obstinacy and Submission (1:13-16), In the Fish’s Belly (2:1-3a), A Canticle from the Depths (2:3b-10), On Dry Land (2:11), In Nineveh (3:1-4), Changes of Heart, Change of Mind (3:5-10), Move/Countermove (4:1-6), Heat and Light (4:7-11). Inserted along the way are essays on themes such as “Storms in Ancient Lore,” “Lot Casting,” “The Use of Animals in Biblical Narratives,” “Hebrew Poetry,” and “Divine Clemency.”

The commentary concludes with 30 pages of “Interpretations,” introduced with a number of interesting and at times off-beat quotations (“The story sounds in fact like an allegory of a nervous breakdown and subsequent spiritual conversion” [A. Koestler]) and continuing with treatments

of “Jonah as History or Fiction” and “Narrative Art and Literary Typology in Jonah.”

Sasson resists the temptation to emend or rearrange the Masoretic text (4:5 remains where it is). He pays close attention to the notations of the Masoretes, endeavoring to make hermeneutical sense of them (see, for example, on 2:11). His arguments for the unity of the book listed on pp. 19-20 are persuasive, especially as one follows along through his exegetical discussions. Sasson has some wise comments about dating the book, an enterprise which he deems first of all not possible and secondly not essential for understanding. He has gathered an invaluable collection of data on Jonah, including information about seafaring in the ancient world (139), a listing of words unique to Jonah (302), and the material in the excurses listed above.

Among some of the critical points that I noted: In his commendable enthusiasm for detail, Sasson is at times guilty of over-exegeting the text. Is it really true, for example, that *hisseba lehiššaber* of 1:4 “captures the sound of planks cracking when tortured by raging waters” (96)? Or are the repeated labials *beth, pe* of 1:14 really “imitating hushed pleading” (132)? Why use the term “verset” instead of the more usual “colon” when dealing with Hebrew poetry (165ff.)? The translation of 4:1, “This outcome was so terribly upsetting to Jonah that he was dejected” is weak; doesn’t the Hebrew say that Jonah was burning with anger and even ready to die?

Sasson’s writing style is never boring and often brilliant. He comments on the last words of the book, “and animals galore”:

...we may nevertheless agree that ending on such a phrase is perfectly suited to Jonah, a small book of no more than 689 words, in which one can nevertheless read about storms over the seas and hot winds over distant lands, take a tour of Sheol and learn how [to] avoid its clutches, discover vast-bellied fish and miraculously generated plants, even meet humane pagans and penitent Ninevites. (319)

The book, however, could have been trimmed. The author likes to say what he is going to say, and then say it (e.g., “I will use this space...I will address Jonah’s prayer...when we get to it” [202]); just saying it would have been sufficient.

This volume nicely complements the commentary of H. W. Wolff which is more concerned with form-critical, theological, and homiletical issues (*Obadiah and Jonah*, translated by Margaret Kohl [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986]). It is a treasure trove of data and of insights into the words of the book of Jonah. Sasson concludes:

...as I take leave of Jonah, I offer my best wishes to the next person who would pick up the many challenges of this occasionally irksome, but always provocative and tantalizing little book. (352)

These words invite any of us with an interest in this book that has sparked such an “enormous curiosity” to continue at the task of interpretation, now better prepared with the commentary Sasson has written.

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TERMINAL CHOICES: EUTHANASIA, SUICIDE, AND THE RIGHT TO DIE, by Robert N. Wennberg. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989. Pp. 246. \$13.95 (paper).

In the last twenty years biomedical ethics has become a major industry. First there was the Hastings Center, then the Kennedy Center. Today there are centers for biomedical ethics scattered everywhere. There are national and international organizations, journals, and degree programs. The literature grows so rapidly that no one person can keep up with it.

There is probably no area of ethics in which the public is as interested and as informed. Every human being is quite naturally drawn to questions that bear directly on his or her own life and health. It is also apparent to almost everyone that the problems with which biomedical ethics deals have no easy solutions. In political questions, for instance, there is a tendency to think right and wrong are self-evident. People seem to think the only problem is the lack of moral courage on the part of their opponents. On the other hand, solutions to problems arising in the context of

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rapidly expanding medical technologies are not so clear. Information, reflection, conversation, respect for the opinion of others seem necessary and appropriate.

Robert Wennberg, professor of philosophy at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, and an ordained Presbyterian minister, has taken a single issue, placed it in a specific context, and addressed it from an acknowledged point of view. The issue is choices we make about the end of life; the context is the current debate about legalization of euthanasia; and the point of view is the Christian faith. The result is a focused presentation and a tight argument covering a great deal of ground and attending to a broad spectrum of data and opinion. A distinctive feature is that Wennberg chooses to write from the perspective of the patient rather than that of the health professional, and it is specifically the Christian patient whose perspective is taken. The central question of the book is: “How should we as Christians seek to die, and how do we prepare ourselves for that final witness to our faith? What moral constraints should guide us in shaping our own deaths and in offering (hazarding to give) advice to others?” (viii).

Along the way, the many complexities and ambiguities of terminal choices are addressed with analytical skill and humane sensitivity. Some of the topics introduced are: Legalizing Euthanasia, Treatment Refusal, Passive and Active Suicide, Suicide through the Agency of Another, Suicide and Natural Causes, Altruistic Suicides, Surcease Suicide and Voluntary Active Euthanasia, Passive Euthanasia and the Refusal of Life-extending Treatment, Withholding Treatment and Stopping Treatment, Ordinary vs. Extraordinary Treatment, Rejecting Artificial Feeding, Brain Death vs. Persistent Vegetative State, and Legalizing Voluntary Active Euthanasia. Greco-Roman, biblical, and Jewish attitudes are discussed. Both Augustine and

Aquinas are brought into the argument.

The usefulness of this volume does not depend on agreement with the author's conclusions. It does not even depend on the author's understanding of ethical reflection or Christian confession. Wennberg discards both the principles of autonomy (the Kantian tradition) and of various versions of utility (the Aristotelian-Thomistic-Utilitarian tradition) and opts for a faith-specific way to approach moral questions. He consistently refers to Christian faith as the gaining of friendship with God, the Father of Jesus Christ, and the transformation "into the moral likeness of that God via an earthly pilgrimage, the boundaries of which he has established" (224).

The value of Wennberg's work lies in the fact that anyone who reads it, or uses it in a classroom or adult forum, will be led into the intricacies, the ambiguities, and the complexities of the ethics of terminal choices. The reader will be also challenged, by the detailed and articulate position presented here, to struggle through these issues with greater information, insight, and even passion.

Anyone interested in the rapidly expanding field of biomedical ethics should also not miss *Christian Faith, Health and Medical Practice* (Eerdmans, 1989) and *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering* (Eerdmans, 1990). The first is authored by a distinguished group of scholars from a number of disciplines and a variety of ethical positions. It is a demanding but rewarding task to work through it. The second is a serious, but almost meditative, reflection on the dying of a child, a statement on "God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering" by Stanley Hauerwas, one of the most prolific and influential of contemporary Christian ethicists.

Eerdmans is to be congratulated for its aggressive policy of publishing important works in the field of biomedical ethics, an area for theological investigation and reflection which cannot be ignored by any informed human being, and certainly not by any conscientious Christian minister.

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WHY? ON SUFFERING, GUILT, AND GOD, by A. van de Beek. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990. Pp. 344. \$21.95 (paper).

There are few tests that try the faith of believers more severely than the problem of evil. In *Why? On Suffering, Guilt, and God*, Leiden University professor A. van de Beek offers an answer that is both biblically grounded and theologically developed. A by-product of his dissertation on the mutability of God, this book reviews various models in "the multicolored mystery of God and his world," and proposes "a framework into which the different models can be fitted."

The most popular model, namely, God as the source of all things, attributes suffering to the will of God as a pedagogical device and a punishment for sin. Pain and distress are "the underside of God's embroidery by which he creates his splendid kingdom." While suffering is not necessarily the consequence of sin, it is a necessary condition for meaning. Behind these considerations, moreover, is the biblical picture of a dynamic, living God who fights alongside

God's creation against evil and suffering. While the notion of a God of absolute freedom perplexes us, it is a legitimate concept that we must maintain with due reverence. When we know that "this Holy One is the God who loves [us] in Jesus Christ," then, although God's "way may be in hiddenness, in clouds and darkness," we can still entrust ourselves to the divine providence.

A second model begins with God's goodness and opposition to evil. According to this view, suffering is the result of human sin, individual and collective, which causes all manner of personal, social, and even natural disaster. God gives space to God's people, allowing them freedom to choose their ways. A further maneuver to exonerate God deepens this dualism by positing an Evil One or Satan who personifies total evil. As well, the God of revelation, known in Jesus Christ, opposes suffering by delivering God's Self to its agony. Known in contradiction, God the rejected one battles against evil and breaks its grip in a future where suffering is taken up in an "eschatological fulfillment."

Given that each of these models is biblical and authentic, van de Beek suggests that theology test assertions "in light of the real actions of God." While immutable in faithfulness, the God of the Bible is changing in revelation. Although God's ways are a mystery full of riddles, God is invariably good, and is fully articulated in Christ, who is "God's definitive decision." Just as all the models can be viewed in light of Jesus Christ, so all the models are functional in terms of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the work of the Spirit in human beings includes the threefold action of praying, which is "to think and talk together with God," arguing or contending with God for the sake of justice, and working with God to advance God's kingdom. The verdict over God's ways with the world lies in the future kingdom of God when the suffering and sighs of the oppressed will be changed to glory and praise in fulfillment of God's promises.

As a "collage" intended to do justice to as much data as possible, this book is a rich resource of biblical and theological material. It is commendable as an honest admission that Christians believe things that contradict each other. However, while its dialectical design is sturdy, its "zigzag" thinking, like a zigzag fence, does not settle on one side or the other of an issue, often leaving the reader with more perplexity rather than less. The author counsels sufferers to "live with God" in their suffering, to find comfort in God's hiddenness, and to continue praying in the absence of God—all pastoral counsels rather than rational consolations. He turns to the "real actions of God" as a criterion for adjudicating between the models, but admits God's ways are full of riddles and mystery.

While theodicies may well raise more problems than they solve, one would hope for more illumination in a book whose title is "Why?" Nevertheless, one could do far worse in exploring a topic that does not easily yield to our rational probes. Van de Beek may not always achieve the coherence he intends, but he certainly delivers on the fullness of treatment that he promises.

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EXODUS, by Terence Fretheim. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville: John Knox, 1991. Pp. 333. \$21.95.

Readers of *Word & World* will need no introduction to Terry Fretheim, the distinguished

and prolific Old Testament theologian at Luther Northwestern. Nor will readers of *Word & World* be surprised to learn that Fretheim has written a stunning, elegant, daring commentary on the book of Exodus that is critically responsible and theologically rich in suggestion. As the format and intention of the Interpretation series anticipate, Fretheim experiments with fresh modes of discourse for a commentary. The outcome is a readable narrative exposition which at every turn shows things afresh, and which in the end provides imaginative materials which the preacher will not be able to resist.

On critical questions, Fretheim is at the front edge of interpretive developments which permit new modes of commentary. He is fully conversant with the long scholarly tradition of source analysis, but he is scarcely interested in the question of sources. Indeed, it has been source analysis which has made conventional commentaries not only boring but largely useless for preachers. Against such an approach, Fretheim takes up the final form of the text.

In like manner, Fretheim knows about questions of historicity concerning the events of Exodus, wilderness sojourn, and the meeting at Sinai. But because he takes the book of Exodus to be a testimony of faith, he does not linger over such enigmatic historical matters. This engagement with current hermeneutical work means that the old literary and historical questions are almost completely bracketed out, so that the text in its own vitality and oddity can be considered. Fretheim works within the settled interpretive contours of narrative, law, and liturgy, but does so with a remarkable freshness.

He is at his best in the *narrative materials* of the first half of the book. Concerning in turn “the call of Moses,” the plague cycle, and the wilderness materials, Fretheim is able to detect intentional liturgical patterns which sound a theological voice. That voice sounds the kerygmatic intention of the material. Attention to detail and sensitivity to nuance mark the exposition, which is passionately focused on the larger theological claims of the text.

In the *legal materials*, Fretheim is less daring and imaginative, no doubt because the material itself is less open to the sort of venturesome reading in which Fretheim excels. The outcome is good, solid exposition, but with less surprise. I suggest that Fretheim is less attentive to recent development in sociological method than he is to emerging literary method, and such advances in sociology might have opened this material more fully than has been done. For example, concerning the tenth commandment on coveting, Fretheim inclines to read it as a statement of “the spirit of the individual that forms the interior ground of the violation of the other commandments” (238). Attention to land practices and the crisis over covenantal management of land might have led interpretation into a much more public mode. Thus the exposition is cautious and at some points surprisingly conventional.

In the third large section of the book, the *cultic provisions* of Exod 25-31, 35-40, Fretheim is unexpectedly brief and in some ways disappointing. I am not sure what I expected, except that I did anticipate that he would open up this material that is endlessly baffling. It may be that nothing can be wrought from the material, beyond generalizations about intention and pattern. Or it may be that Fretheim is simply not interested in the material. In any case, while the commentary helps only minimally on this material, few practical expositors of the Bible are likely to notice or to be much disappointed. The marginalization of this material in this commentary matches its marginalization in most of our expository work.

The power of this commentary is that Fretheim is willing to think and speak as a daring theologian. He knows the niceties of critical interpretation, but these niceties do not hinder his theological boldness. In this commentary, Fretheim has wrought an exceedingly delicate

achievement. While taking his work as a commentator seriously, he has in fact continued and advanced his own distinctive theological program,

already offered in a number of important writings. His theological perspective was early on shaped by a process hermeneutic, in critical response, I suspect, to a Lutheran tradition that did not allow sufficient freedom for playful interpretation willing to entertain ambiguity in the text. From that perspective, Fretheim has paid primary attention to the creation traditions, and to the power of God's blessing that is constitutive for the life-process of the world. Along with a number of other scholars, Fretheim takes a critical stance over against an older "mighty deeds of God in history" perspective, and champions a reading from the claims of creation faith.

Fretheim's distinctive mark in this account, which is indeed an intellectual *tour de force*, is that he interprets the Exodus narrative inside the categories of creation faith. Thus he goes well beyond usual interpretive categories and in so doing, lets us see with fresh eyes. Thus "Pharaoh" is not only agent of social injustice from whom Israel requires rescue, but "Pharaoh" is also a disturber and distorter of the order of creation, a disturbance and a distortion that will inevitably bring massive death. Fretheim's theological sensitivity and boldness thus set the text into a new theological world. For the preacher this commentary promises endless suggestions of how the text touches the reality of human life.

Now, so that this comment will be understood as a critical review and not simply as an enthusiastic advertising blurb, I add this note. The imaginative freshness of a creation perspective, Fretheim's hallmark, is indeed the distinctive strength of this book. I suspect it may also be the place where the book is vulnerable. It seems to me that at some points Fretheim overstates this case and forces the issue where it is not required or perhaps even convincing. Moreover, Fretheim sets his creation perspective over against liberation theology (18-20). My impression is that in his introduction, Fretheim offers something of a caricature of liberation theology. In his specific comments, however, Fretheim is more open to a liberation perspective than he appears to be in his introduction, I imagine because the text itself requires such a reading. In the end it may be that his passion for a creation hermeneutic causes Fretheim to screen out some dimensions of the text and some methodological possibilities that do not fit.

In context, however, this is a small matter. Fretheim is making a programmatic proposal, and in his large, ambitious project, overstatement is permitted and is indeed necessary. Use of this commentary finally will eventuate not simply in fresh discernment of this or that text, but in a decisive shift of interpretive categories. His large vision will get us past many of our unfortunate categories of reading that prevent us from hearing the text.

Fretheim fulfills much of the purpose of the work of Brevard Childs on Exodus. Childs' own commentary on Exodus, inventive as it is, had a quality of roughness and awkwardness to it. Childs, however, was probing for a theological reading of the final form of the text, when no modern commentator had yet attended to that responsibility. Indeed Fretheim could not do what he has done without the effort of Childs. But Fretheim has capitalized upon the lead of Childs with finesse and compelling power beyond our expectation. In this commentary, Fretheim has not only given us an extraordinary book. He has emerged as arguably the most important theological interpreter of Scripture on the horizon. He has gathered emerging strands of interpretation into a new unity that is peculiarly his own. What is peculiarly his own, however, he has graciously

made ours as well.

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STRONG AT THE BROKEN PLACES: PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND THE CHURCH, by Stewart D. Govig. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989. Pp. 155. \$9.95 (paper).

This little volume explores the question of disability and the church. Govig's method is not so much "systematic" as it is "systemic." Govig's approach is tailored to his estimation of the challenge: "social barriers still loom larger than physical ones" (49). The view is common among people

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with disabilities: What truly handicaps people with disabilities are the attitudes of others. Thus, Govig eschews a systematic analysis of such things as disability, ecclesiology, ministry, evangelism, etc., and instead divides his book into two parts, "Brokenness" and "Transforming Brokenness." The subsections of the two parts ("Crippled," "Marked," "Pitied," "Avoided," and "Fellowship," "Encouragement," "Ministry," "Promise") are developed in order to cast light into the corners where attitudes hinder and help those with handicaps.

Govig's book brims with scriptural citations, stories about people living with disabilities, examples from literature, research from the social sciences, and diagrams. These rich illustrations are the strength of the book. The weakness of the book is that it lacks an equally strong central argument. At times it seems like the vignettes and scriptural insights have been left to carry all the weight. The book does afford the kind of knowing which one gains from listening to another's autobiography. What the book fails to provide is the kind of understanding which would empower a person to persuade and convince others that certain patterns and structures ought to change for the sake of the gospel. When the reader turns the last page, she will find that she has not been imparted a wealth of powerful, new information, strategies or ideas.

So the question remains, what good is this book? Or to phrase the question more poignantly, who should read this book and why? Those people who are deeply familiar with disability will find in this book comforting stories to buoy their spirits. But they will find little material which might alleviate the frustrations which have accumulated from years of flailing at societal attitudes. Pastors will profit from reading this book to the extent that they will get a sense for the layers of inhibiting pressures under which people with disabilities live. But no thorough education on disability or theological issues related to disability is to be found here.

Govig's volume is best suited to faithful Christians searching to live their lives vocationally under the cross. I recommend this book as a fine addition to any church library and a suitable project for a congregational book club, circle, or study group.

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ANCIENT CHRISTIAN GOSPELS: THEIR HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT, by Helmut Koester. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990. Pp. 480. \$29.95.

With an impressive command of primary sources and secondary literature, Helmut Koester synthesizes a complex project to which he has devoted a major part of his scholarly career. He seeks to reverse the notion that the so-called apocryphal gospels (he treats *Gospel of Thomas*, *Dialogue of the Savior*, *Unknown Gospel of Papyrus Egerton 2*, *Apocryphon of James*, and *Gospel of Peter*) merely derive from the canonical gospels and represent later “heretical” views. Rather than evidence of an uncontrolled expansion of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Koester argues that these writings demonstrate diverse Jesus traditions abroad already in the first century. His previous efforts to demonstrate the presence of early traditions about Jesus in these works and in church writers (for a summary, see chapter 5, “The Harmonization of the Canonical Gospels”) serve him well as he continues to reconstruct the theological positions which predated, rivaled, and set the stage for the New Testament.

In Chapter 1, Koester’s task is to dislodge “gospel” as a description of the genre exemplified by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Whatever the literary character of these writings might be, no writer in the second century until Marcion referred to them as “gospels.” Neither do the Gospels refer to themselves as gospels, except, of course, Mark 1:1, which Koester construes as an *incipit* provided by a copyist. Furthermore, in Hellenistic Greek the term “gospel” always designates a message rather than a written document, and it is in this kerygmatic sense that New Testament writers employ the term. Having thus loosened the grip the New Testament Gospels have held on the definition of “gospel,” Koester is free to suggest the fol-

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lowing criterion for gathering a number of disparate genres under the category of “gospel literature,” some of which had no interest in the death and resurrection of Jesus: “this corpus includes all those writings which are constituted by the transmission, use, and interpretation of material and traditions from and about Jesus of Nazareth” (46).

After dismissing the problem of the relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and the beginning of the oral tradition, Chapter 2 treats the following documents as sources for the reconstruction of the sayings of Jesus in the earliest period: Acts and the Pastoral Epistles; 1 Peter; 1 Clement; James; Q; Paul’s epistles; and the *Gospel of Thomas*. Only the last three require comment here. Koester’s treatment of Q succinctly presents the emerging scholarly opinion that Q must be understood in terms of two stages: the first is characterized by realized eschatology maintained in Jesus’ words much as in the case of the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the second emphasizes apocalyptic motifs and judgment. This, of course, is a difficult distinction to make in a document which is itself hypothetical, but readers persuaded by Koester of the possibility will turn for further argumentation to J. Kloppenborg (*The Formation of Q*), whom Koester cites often and with approval.

Paul’s letters testify to two distinct collections of Jesus’ sayings. Koester’s reconstruction of the first, which pertains to church order, is very plausible, but his case for the second, a collection of Wisdom sayings which mediate salvation by way of knowledge, is less convincing, since some of the passages supposedly parallel to the *Gospel of Thomas* (e.g., 1 Cor 4:8) are more readily explained in terms of commonplace philosophic ideas (e.g., only the wise man is

king). Corinthian pretentiousness may not have been Gnostic but construed by Paul in Stoic terms.

In any case, Koester's treatment of 1 Cor 1-4 alerts the reader to one of the two critical skills required for a careful evaluation of the remainder of his work, namely, the ability to discern when a resemblance is actually a parallel. The issue again arises when he argues that the *Gospel of Thomas* contains traditions of Jesus' sayings which predate the Gospel of John. Many of the parallels are not as obvious as Koester assumes, yet he himself invites this kind of scrutiny by presenting the canonical and extra-canonical material in parallel columns.

The other skill is the ability to judge in the case of clear parallels which (if either!) is derived from the other. Criteria are indeed invoked. Absence of apocalyptic motifs and related christological titles, realized eschatology, brevity, and simplicity indicate the originality of sayings. Yet, readers must measure for themselves the persuasiveness of these principles and Koester's use of them to establish the "more original" character of the Thomas parallels in comparison with sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.

The title of Chapter 3 ("From Dialogues and Narratives to the Gospel of John") hints at Koester's underlying thesis that the intention of the author of the Fourth Gospel is to substitute knowledge of Jesus for the Gnostic emphasis on knowledge of self, while employing the same traditional material. To substantiate this view, Koester analyzes the second-century *Dialogue of the Savior*, which he claims contains material which John clearly possesses yet also revises. To make the comparison in the first place, however, one has to assume that John is taking a polemical attitude toward his sources, since without this assumption it is difficult to see parallels at all (see especially pp. 179-181). In other words, a theological critique of his sources compensates for the low level of verbal similarity. Thus, the argument comes down to one's belief in the presence of Gnosticism at a very early period, a highly controversial point. The same problem arises with Koester's use of the *Apocryphon of James* (see pp. 191-192). Traditions contained in *Papyrus Egerton 2* and the *Gospel of Peter*, on the other hand, in view of the high level of verbal similarity, require the ability to discern the direction of derivation, and both documents, according to Koester, are most satisfactorily explained as pointing back to sources for the canonical Gospels. Readers who have reservations concerning these conclusions will welcome his judicious and illuminating treatment of Crossan's claim

that the passion narratives in all four Gospels derive from one written source (the so-called *Cross Gospel*).

The most noteworthy points of Chapter 4 ("The Synoptic Gospels") include an intriguing discussion of the text of Mark (Matthew and Luke may sometimes preserve a reading more original than canonical Mark) and the reiteration of the view, so vexing to literary critics, that "Mark is primarily a faithful collector." Also, readers who have in the past followed Koester's treatment of the figure of the "divine man" will not be surprised to learn that Mark, with its emphasis on Jesus' death, attacks the inflated christology and corresponding self-understanding of its sources. Koester does not, however, offer a rebuttal to the criticism that the "divine man" is more a tool of modern investigators working with an ideal type than a discrete historical reality.

Ancient Christian Gospels is far richer than this review suggests. Koester rules on almost every critical issue in the history of gospel literature in the first two centuries. One might wish

that a theoretical discussion of the criteria both for establishing parallels and for detecting priority and dependence had introduced the treatment of the literary materials. Nevertheless, those who share Koester's goal of uncovering the literary history of early Christianity will start here.

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LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN THE WORLD: A HANDBOOK, by E. Theodore Bachmann and Mercia Brenne Bachmann. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989. Published in cooperation with the Lutheran World Federation. Pp. 608. \$34.95.

This is a feast of a book for anyone interested in the Lutheran churches of the world. It offers short descriptions and religious histories of major areas of the globe, brief essays on Lutheranism in each region, and sketches of the Lutheran churches in their respective countries. The volume also includes a foreword by the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a short historical and descriptive essay on the organization, the text of its constitution, thumbnail portraits of its presidents and general secretaries, statistics, a selected bibliography of its history, and an index of the names of churches and organizations discussed. Although it will most often be used as a reference work, *Lutheran Churches in the World* is written in an accessible style and can also be read profitably as a survey of contemporary Lutheranism and a study of its historical background.

More than 600 pages long, this volume is actually the second edition of a work first published in 1977. In that year a double issue of *Lutheran World* and its German counterpart, *Lutherische Rundschau*, appeared as handbook of the Lutheran churches of the world under the editorship of E. Theodore Bachmann. When need was felt for a new edition before the assembly of the LWF in Budapest in 1984, Bachmann was asked to prepare a revision. There was not sufficient time to prepare a new edition for the Budapest gathering, but the present volume was finished in time for the assembly in Curitiba, Brazil in 1990.

E. Theodore Bachmann has detailed the history of this volume's writing and publication in an article, "Confessional Kin Worldwide," appearing in *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 64 (Spring 1991) and in his preface to the work itself. Three aspects of that history are important to the critical use of the book. First, officials of each of the churches included had the opportunity to review and correct the relevant text as written by the two Bachmanns. Second, passages treating certain controversial matters were omitted at the request of the ecclesiastical authorities (26). The published work is, therefore, bowdlerized to an extent that cannot be known to the reader without access to the primary documentation. Third, the description of each body begins with an assessment of the denomination in its present state, followed by rather than preceded by a discussion of the historical background. This format, unusual and potentially distracting to some readers, was adopted at the request of members of espe-

cially African and Asian churches in order to emphasize denominational parity and cooperation among the Lutheran churches of the world (26).

The Bachmanns brought intense interest, long personal acquaintance with Lutheran churches, and thorough research to the writing of *The Lutheran Churches in the World*. Authors with sympathy for their subject, an eye for telling detail, and a gift for compact description, they write in an easy style. They are especially apt at catching the contribution of an individual and describing the ethos of a church. Their work on the American Lutheran churches offers examples. A single sentence about Fredrik A. Schiotz captures both the strength and the limitations of a man who served as president of both the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the American Lutheran Church as well as of the Lutheran World Federation: “His long experience in patiently letting diverse participants have their say created a spirit of harmony” (594). Their brief summary of the history and spirit of the United Lutheran Church of America is an instance of their skill in evoking the spirit of a church body (599-603).

A definite perspective informs the work of these authors. While this point of view gives coherence and continuity to their presentation, it occasionally leads them astray as well. Their presentation of American Lutheran history can once again serve as an example. A specific reading of American Lutheran history, an explicit

evaluation of the movement toward American Lutheran unity, and a certain approach to ecumenism are for instance implied when the policy of Kent S. Knutson, known as an advocate of American Lutheran unity and a proponent of Lutheran-Roman Catholic rapprochement, is described as “advancing a soundly inter-Lutheran and ecumenical policy” (594). Similarly in their description of David W. Preus, for example, the authors credit the presiding bishop of the American Lutheran Church with support for the merger producing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), but neglect to mention that he publicly opposed the merger of 1988 on the grounds that it would not result in more effective mission (598). Preus did not lend his backing to the union creating the ELCA until it became clear that the constituency of his church willed it. Similar theological tendencies on the part of the authors can be noted in their description of the Scandinavian churches. The Bishop of Oslo is described as the “Primate” of the Church of Norway, while that title has been used only informally and has often been criticized in Norway (408). The Church of Norway does not in fact recognize a primacy, although the incumbent of the see of Oslo is generally elected annually as chairperson of the church’s council of bishops (409). Other bishops of the Church of Norway are, however, eligible for election to this post should the need arise. Similarly, the Church of Sweden is described as having “an episcopal polity, including apostolic succession,” an assertion which requires considerable historical qualification if it refers to the endurance in Sweden of a *successio personalis*, a topic extensively discussed by Swedish historians (413).

As is inevitable in a work so extensive, these authors are open to question in matters of detail and proportion. To refer to the treatment of the American churches yet one more time, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches is credited with being “the catalyst” of the merger of 1988, an overstatement in view of strong sentiment in both the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church that would likely have eventuated in union sometime in the 1980s or 1990s (581). The section on the United States also illustrates problems with disproportion. While the history of the United Lutheran Church in America, as the largest of the churches to become a part of the Lutheran Church in America, is given three and one half pages,

the Augustana Synod is dispatched in a column. Likewise the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the largest of the bodies to form the American Lutheran Church in 1960-1963, is treated very briefly. Detail, excellent where provided, is also uneven. There is, for example, no discussion, however brief such would have been, of the presidencies of Robert Marshall and James Crumley of the Lutheran Church in America. Mention of bibliographical resources on each of the churches, if necessarily selective, would also have improved this volume.

Finally and unavoidably, this handbook was dated before it appeared in print. As E. Theodore Bachmann has indicated in the article mentioned above, data for the volume was gathered in the mid-1980s before the collapse of Eastern European communism and the unification of Germany. Due to the date of its writing and publication, *Lutheran Churches in the World* is something like a snapshot of global Lutheranism taken in the middle of a tumultuous decade. While this circumstance rendered this book out of date when it came off the press, it also makes it extraordinarily valuable as a description of Lutheran churches in Eastern Europe and Germany just before the dawn of a new era. Ironically, historians will probably come to value this volume for its vivid anachronism in this respect.

Lutheran Churches in the World will remain an invaluable guide to students of global Lutheranism for decades to come. All those who care for the life of the Lutheran churches around the globe will want to keep it on a shelf within easy reach and use it regularly. When they do, they will murmur thanks to E. Theodore Bachmann and Mercia Brenne Bachmann for this labor of learned love.

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WHITE WOMEN'S CHRIST AND BLACK WOMEN'S JESUS: FEMINIST CHRISTOLOGY AND WOMANIST RESPONSE, by Jacquelyn Grant. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989. Pp. 264. \$32.95; 21.95 (paper).

Feminist theology stands in need of knowledgeable assessment. Three decades of women's intense reflection on the theological meaning of their distinctive experiences have yielded numerous books and essays that span a wide range of proposals. While much of the literature consists of critical efforts to expose misogyny in early and recent Christian thought, critique of feminist theology by those who share its aims has barely begun and is long overdue. Critique from opponents of feminist theology has not been lacking, but many such critiques have limited value; writers who are unsympathetic to the inclusion of women's experience in theology often misrepresent feminist theology as a monolith and miss the mark. *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus*, however, hits the mark.

Jacquelyn Grant is an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and teaches theology at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. Grant uses the experience of African American women—the experience of trust in Jesus amid oppression by race, sex, and class—as her starting point. Throughout the book Grant critiques two aspects of feminist theologies: first, White feminist theologians' articulation of christological issues and second, the method of feminist theologies.

Grant cites two major problems feminist theologians have articulated with traditional Christology. First, the maleness of Jesus is a problem because he as Christ is the unique incarnation of God; this means the unique incarnation of God is a male. This raises the question of how Jesus saves or can save women. Second, arguments restricting women's role in the church have used the maleness of Jesus. This has an impact on feminist Christology. Grant summarizes Chalcedonian Christology; then elaborates the christological answers feminists propose.

Feminists are not agreed on the answers to questions they pose to Christology because there are differences in method. Grant identifies three basic approaches among feminist theologians. *Biblical feminists* are those who see the Scriptures as the primary source for theology. This group includes the so-called evangelicals, including Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, as well as Paul Jewett and Leonard Swidler, whose exegetical efforts have served biblical feminism. *Liberation feminists* are influenced by the method of liberation theology, and include the liberation of women as a core issue within the wider struggle against other forms of oppression. In this category Grant includes Letty Russell, representing liberationists who view the Scriptures as normative. Rosemary Radford Ruether represents liberationists who give more weight to women's experience. *Rejectionist feminists* are those who have despaired of the sexism in Scripture and tradition and reject them as sources for their feminist theological method. Mary Daly is considered in this category. This schema is original with Grant and improves on the categories proposed by others. It is extremely helpful for anyone who would understand the diversity of feminist approaches. Each type gives a distinct christological answer.

Rejectionist feminists have answered the question of Jesus in the negative. Grant traces the development of the thought of Mary Daly, who as a reformist saw hope in reinterpreting Jesus in ways helpful to women, but who as a rejectionist sees nothing salvific about him as Christ. "Christology becomes synonymous with the destruction of (strong, independent) women. Consequently, salvation for women rests within the context of women's experience itself" (169).

Biblical feminists, on the other hand, have reinterpreted Jesus by trying to see ways in which he transcended his patriarchal context. According to these theologians Jesus may be seen as non-conformist or feminist. Leonard Swidler sees Jesus as a feminist and androgyny as a positive concept. For biblical feminists like Mollenkott Jesus presents a model of mutuality in human relationships that

should be imitated in the relations of women and men. Grant writes:

...Jesus has been viewed through the narrow spectacles of patriarchal society. It is only as we are able to arrive at different and more equitable understanding of human relationship that the "deviant" behaviors of Jesus can be recognized. (109)

The main achievement of biblical feminism is its recovery of the positive side of Scripture and Jesus for feminists. Its shortcoming is the almost exclusive use of the Bible and neglect of the rest of tradition.

Liberationist feminist theologians do reflect on the whole tradition. Liberationists have moved "beyond the mere figure of Jesus to place Christology in the arena of God's incarnation"

(144). As they affirm the humanity of God incarnate and not just the maleness of Jesus, the emphasis shifts from Jesus to Christ.

Grant's own christological reflections are shaped by her experience as an African American woman, not the dilemmas posed by White feminism. She reminisces:

As children of religious grandparents (maternal and paternal), as children of an African Methodist Episcopal minister, my siblings and I were quite accustomed to the name of Jesus. The love and kindness, the giving and sacrifices, and the community service and political interest we witnessed in our parents were in the name of Jesus.

The theology of somebodiness which they lived out without pretension, conveyed to their children that in spite of the world's denial of you, Jesus (God) affirms you. So you must go on....Hence the personal commitment I made to Jesus as a youngster was not one that restricted me as a Black person or as a female, but affirmed me and projected me into areas where, I later learned, "I was not supposed to go" by virtue of my race and gender. (ix)

This liberating experience of Jesus is reflected in Black theology. Grant cites James Cone in identifying the Christ of Black theology as the Jesus of the Scriptures. Through use of slave narratives and collections of African American prayers Grant illumines what Jesus meant for Black women. Jesus was the "divine co-sufferer," not the legitimizer of Black suffering (212). Jesus suffered as they did, but was also God incarnate empowering them. Jesus relativized racist claims for submission: "Black women's affirmation of Jesus as God meant that White people were not God" (213).

Using the experience of African American women, Grant challenges White feminist theology's method and assumptions behind the christological issues. One of the premises held in common by feminist theologians is that "women's experience represents the context out of which feminist theologies emerge" (3). That which theology called human experience was *in fact* a reflection of men's experience. Theology too often developed the notions of sin and love by emphasizing self-assertion and self-giving, respectively. Feminist theologians have countered that inasmuch as self-giving is culturally mandated for women as the nurturers of society, selflessness rather than self-assertion is the more likely sin of women. Thus a one-sided treatment of sin that emphasizes self-assertion puts women at a disadvantage. To remedy this one-sidedness of theology, women's particular experience must be a source for theology.

Grant rightly sees feminist method as an attempt to emphasize particularity-the particular experience of women as a starting point for theological reflection over against the false universalizing of men's experience.

The problem, as Grant demonstrates, is that White feminist theology is caught in the same false generalization. What feminist theological method reflects is not the experience of all women, but the experience of *White, middle class women*; therefore the feminist theological project to date is flawed by the same universalizing tendency as the theologies it criticizes.

Grant's final chapter provides sketches for a (Black) womanist Christology from the perspective of Black women's experience as constituted in slavery and domestic service. Her portrait of two separate and unequal roles for Black and White women shatters the picture of a homogeneous female experience assumed by White feminists.

ses, reflecting the fact that White women were just as much participants in this system of slavery as were White men. (197)

The end of the institution of slavery left African Americans in the same subordinate social and economic condition.

Slavery and segregation have created such a gulf between these women, that White feminists' common assumption that all women are in the same situation with respect to sexism is difficult to understand....(196)

With theorist Bell Hooks, Grant uses African American women's experience as the locus where race, sex, and class subjugation converge. It is therefore the most adequate source for a triple issue analysis. While I have agreed with the Hooks argument, I find that class oppression trails behind race and sex for Grant in comparison with a work such as Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class*.

White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus is more critical than constructive. Nor does the author claim it is more than a beginning. Grant's constructive womanist Christology is brief (205-222). The author calls for further constructive work. Despite the brevity, this is an important achievement. It sets forth some distinctive accents of African American women's insights into the Christ; not an abstract Christ, but Jesus, the divine co-sufferer with oppressed Black women. Through their eyes Grant anchors her Christology in Jesus. The critical import for White feminist theology, which has found Jesus so problematic, is profound. As a White feminist Christian, I found this book useful. Its vision of Jesus Christ through the suffering and hope of Black women challenges other Christs who have little to say about race and sex domination.

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