

Biblical Studies Bulletin

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News Briefs —————

After two issues of editorial sabbatical, this prodigal is back, so the normal chaos resumes. My thanks to Philip Jenson and James Blandford Baker for doing such a fine job at the helm of issues 35 and 36 while I was away... - Michael Thompson

Holy Land Report

With Stephen Travis, in July I helped to lead another intrepid group of thirty-five theology student-, clergy- and spouse-types on a three-week study tour based at the Tantur ecumenical institute on the outskirts of Jerusalem. We had a brilliant, safe, rewarding trip with no serious problems (apart from a fractured arm due to a fall). Although the wall / security barrier (depending on who is describing it) is spreading at a quickening pace, making travel to and from the West Bank (including Bethlehem) ever more difficult, we again found the Palestinians very welcoming.

We experienced no fear (we did not visit Gaza or Hebron but did get to Jericho), and the archaeological sites continue to be largely free of tourists. Although at the time of writing this, the Gaza pullout has headlined the news, I would without hesitation urge anyone who has an opportunity to visit the Holy Land to do so. The economy of Bethlehem needs all the help it can get.

What's new? A new access ramp to the Temple Mount is being built by the Western Wall, so that the old one can be removed for future archaeological exploration. We also encountered a new dig just below the modern 'Pool of Siloam' where we emerged from a journey through the waters in Hezekiah's tunnel. The present Siloam pool is unimpressive and not very helpful for those who want to visualize John 9.7,11, but the dig has discovered massive Herodian stonework around a much grander pool that appears to be the one referred to in John's gospel. The dig has just been written

up as the cover story in the Sept/Oct issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (http://www.bib-arch.org/bswb_BAR/bswbba3105f1.html).

David's Palace Found?

We didn't visit the dig, but on our return we read in the Jerusalem Post that an Israeli archaeologist claims to have uncovered remains of David's original palace on Mt Zion, south of the present Temple Mount (<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1123640629316>). This tremendous find is both academically and politically controversial because if correct, it would inevitably lead to extensive further excavation and acquisition of more land currently inhabited by Palestinians. An alternative online site for the story is the NY Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/05/international/middleeast/05jerusalem.html?ex=1125720000&en=f564f4bd0f977346&ei=5070&oref=login>).

Book Review

Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004; ISBN 08028028167)

Sigmund Mowinckel was one of the most important writers on the Psalms of the twentieth century. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* was first published in Norwegian in 1951, then revised (by the author) and translated into English in 1962, and represents the mature statement of his views.

Mowinckel's main contribution was to stress the original place of the psalms in worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. He points out just how many allusions there are in the psalms, eg to worship, to sacrifice, to Jerusalem and to the Temple. He argues that the different kinds of psalms, whether hymns of praise or prayers of lament, make sense as parts of Temple worship – to put it in technical terms this is the *Sitz im Leben* of the different psalm genres. He notes that few psalms are very specific about the particular cause of the thanksgiving or distress they contain, and suggests this is because they were composed for use by different people on various occasions; they aren't just the personal prayer of one person or group in a very specific set of circumstances.

Why hadn't previous scholars recognised this? Mowinckel suggests it is because they appreciated the spiritual value of the psalms, but assumed (being very Protestant) that liturgy and ritual worship were very limited in value. By contrast Mowinckel appreciates the potential of liturgy. So he accepts that public worship can be an expression of private devotion. He also accepts that great poetry can result not just from originality but also from working with traditional forms.

Another of Mowinckel's strengths is his ability not to overstate his case. For example, though he links most psalms to temple worship he allows that a few were written for private meditation ('the learned psalmography'). He thinks that many psalms were intended for use by the king in worship, praying on behalf of the people, but

doesn't press the arguments as far as some other scholars. He thinks there was an autumn festival of God's kingship – indeed this thesis of his was hugely influential – but again doesn't allocate as many psalms to this as some who followed him.

Of course forty years on some of the limitations of Mowinckel's arguments have become apparent. There is still much to be said for his basic principle about the link between many psalms and the temple and the value of liturgy. However on most details more needs to be said. Mowinckel's work is a starting point but by no means the final word. So while I welcome the reprint this is because it will be helpful to scholars and for libraries whose copies have become battered by much use, rather than because I would recommend it for the shelves of most *BSB* readers.

Keith Gruneberg

Competition Update

In our last issue, Ian Paul challenged readers to write the story of the whole Bible in 750 words, promising that the winner would be published in BSB, and that the top three entries would be able to claim a free Grove booklet of their choice.

Entries are pouring in. Ok, we've had two. Thanks, Ray and Paul. Anyone else prepared to share their writing skills in an exercise of faithful imagination and creativity in submission to the gospel tradition? Are you one of those people who grew up thinking you would never win anything? At least one more of you is guaranteed a place in history. This is your chance...

Comments on Commentaries

An assessment of commentaries and other works on books of the Bible to keep you up to date with what will help in preaching and teaching in the local church.

Mark

(This is a revision and updating by John Proctor of Rick Beaton's contribution to BSB 9 in September 1998)

If you have Greek in your arsenal, blow the dust off a copy of **H B Swete** (1909; Kregel reprint, 1978) and discover a rewarding commentary on the Greek text. Although **C E B Cranfield** (CUP, 1959) also demands a thorough knowledge of Greek and is in some respects dated, it is a model of brevity and remains useful. **R A Guelich** produced a moderately conservative, technical commentary on 1.1-8.26 (Word Biblical Commentary, 1989). The dense style makes it slow going, but for those who need detail, it is one of the best out. Sadly, he died before completing the project; the second volume was written by **C A Evans** (2001). As well as completing the commentary through to 16.20, Evans has added a lengthy introduction of his own, in which he argues that Mark's portrayal of Jesus deliberately subverts Roman imperial ideology. The voluminous edition by **R H Gundry** (Eerdmans, 1992) which runs to an astounding 1069 pages, is crammed with detail. Although awkward at points, Gundry is a safe bet for an exhaustive, middle of the road reference commentary.

R T France's New International Greek Testament Commentary (Paternoster, 2002) is lucid, informed and detailed. The focus is primarily historical and theological, rather than expository and applied, although there are some hints of how the author might develop his themes in the pulpit.

For those without Greek, the commentary by **M D Hooker** (Black's NT Commentary, A & C Black, 1991) is clear and concise, and her common-sense exegesis helpful. Hooker has the knack of presenting the fruits of great learning accessibly. **B Witherington's** Mark (Eerdmans, 2001) takes a rhetorical approach, looking at how Mark shaped his message, and how his first hearers would have received and responded to it. **J R Edwards' Pillar NT Commentary** (Eerdmans in USA, IVP in UK, 2002) is full of careful, clear exegesis from a scholarly evangelical. There are two recent commentaries by major Roman Catholic scholars. **J R Donahue** and **D J Harrington** write in the Sacra Pagina series (Liturgical Press, 2002), which aims to be both academically responsible and useful to preachers. And **F J Moloney's** *The Gospel of Mark* (Hendrickson, 2002) takes up a narrative approach to show how Mark can address pastoral situations of failure and suffering.

Shorter commentaries can often offer an engaging read while retaining something of a critical edge. **L Hurtado** (New International Biblical Commentary, 1989) blends sound exegesis and a winning style. **J Brooks' thin volume** (New American Commentary, 1991), one of the more conservative on this list, is even-handed in his exegesis and discussion. **B van Iersel's** *Reading Mark* (T&T Clark/Liturgical, 1989), as its title suggests, is an early, good example of the literary approach. **C S Rodd** (Epworth Preacher's Comm, 2005) writes primarily (although by no means exclusively) to help Methodist lay preachers. And, most readable of all, **N T Wright's** *Mark for Everyone* (SPCK, 2001) picks out the main issues in each passage and relates them to life and faith today.

Finally **C Myers' medium-sized commentary**, *Binding the Strong Man* (Orbis, 1988) is in a class of its own. It is a lively and thought-provoking work, exploring fully the potential of this gospel as a text of social and economic liberation.

John Proctor, Westminster College, Cambridge

Translation Issues

In our last issue, Ian Paul rode a hobby horse and asked readers for comments on translation issues. He got more than he bargained for. Jeremy Pierce from Syracuse NY responds:

I'm writing to correct an error stated in Ian Paul's section on translation errors in the June 2005 BSB. He states, "the commentators agree that 'authenthein' has the sense of 'misusing authority' or 'usurping authority.' So why is it that modern translations, almost without exception, translate this simply as 'have authority'?"

The reason the translations are unwilling to translate that word in such a controversial manner is that the commentators don't in fact agree on this. I'm not sure how someone familiar with the commentaries could miss this. It's true that a number of commentators have taken that view, but George W. Knight's NIGTC and William

Mounce's WBC, two extremely important commentaries on the Greek text, do not agree with such a translation. The authors in *Women In The Church: An Analysis Of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas Koesterberger and Thomas Schreiner, also disagree, with one whole chapter just on this word and another one arguing that the sentence structure requires taking this word positively and not negatively. I believe Luke Timothy Johnson's 1 Timothy commentary in the Anchor Bible series also takes the word not to be a negative usurpation of power but simple exercise of authority. Claiming that the commentators agree on this is simply irresponsible and shows either an attempt to rule some commentators out of contention because of their views or a real unfamiliarity with the literature on this issue. This is a genuine debate, and the fact that all the commentators on one side of the debate agree does not minimize those who just as strongly think a different view is correct.

Ian's response will appear in the next issue.

Steven Whitehead writes,

One of my translation bugbears is an old one (but still annoying): *baptizo* and its associated words. Whenever this everyday word appears in non-theological contexts it means to 'dip', 'plunge' or 'wash'. I think I know some of the reasons why a new word was invented for English Bibles but it has set an unhelpful precedent. In *The Word Made Fresh* (1975) Andrew Edington, the paraphraser, adds a footnote to Acts 9 after the baptism of the Ethiopian: 'Sounds like immersion, Presbyterians. Sorry about that.' Fair comment.

Steven, I won't press readers to guess your ecclesiastical affiliation! I will say that as an Anglican I baptized my mother-in-law by full immersion in a swimming pool one month ago (hastening to add that she had never been baptized before), and more recently completely dunked a colleague's baby in another service. It's hard to argue that Rom 6 doesn't indicate that full immersion is ideal.

Ruth Seed, a Lay Reader writes,

My NT Greek is too minimal for me to make any comments on the actual translation of words but I have recently been irritated by an oddity in the NIV which was brought to my attention in a tutorial with Reader candidates doing their first exegesis on the parable of the Lost Sheep as in Luke 15 1-6. Here and in other places in all three of the synoptic gospels the NIV puts the word "sinners" in inverted commas. This strikes me as totally unjustified – obviously there is nothing in the original Greek which needs this treatment, and I can only read it as an editorial comment which might be acceptable in a paraphrase but not in a direct translation. What do you think?

Thanks for the interesting observation. The NIV is indeed inconsistent. It puts the word 'sinner' in inverted commas (quotation marks, for US readers) in Luke 19.7 but doesn't in the other 21 occurrences in the Old and New Testaments. The plural 'sinners' appears 14 times in inverted commas (Mt 9.10,11; 11.19; Mk 2.15,16 [twice]; Lk 5.30,32,33,34 [twice];

7.34; 15.1; and Gal 2.15), but another 28 times without.

Punctuation can sometimes be critical in our understanding of what's going on in a passage (1 Cor 7.1 is a prime example). The case Ruth cites raises the interesting theological question of who really is a 'sinner' in the Bible. Perhaps we'll have some space for reflections on this in the next issue. In the meantime, here's something to ponder: Does the NT call those who have become Christians 'sinners'? It's not a silly question.

Computer Corner

The good people at Accordance are at it again, announcing a new update to the programme (6.7), discounts on some current modules and a host of new modules about to be released in November including:

- NIGTC and Pillar commentary series from Eerdmans
- Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture series from IVP
- Grammatically tagged Greek text of Philo
- Stuttgart Study Bible with the textual apparatus for the BHS and NA 27 texts and more
- Zondervan CDs for bible study

It was especially good to hear that the Word biblical commentary series is expected in November 2006. For details, go to their website (<http://www.accordancebible.com/about/news.php>).

If I receive news of new offerings for PC users, I will happily print it!

Grove Biblical Series

This month's book by John Proctor is a fine, concise introduction to the Gospel of Mark. It's designed to be helpful to individuals and to groups, and supplementary materials and questions for discussion relating to the book can be found on the Grove web site.

Individual titles in the Biblical Series are available direct from Grove Books at **£2.95 each**. Annual subscription (4 books) costs **£8.50, a saving of 28%**. Call, fax, email sales@grovebooks.co.uk or visit www.grovebooks.co.uk to order.

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