



name Jesus has thus far been found over 70 times on comparable inscriptions.

So...no Grove booklet exploring and explaining this one. Those interested in the distributions and significance of various occurrences of names in the 1st century, though, might be better served by turning to some of the insights of Richard Bauckham's new book, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Eerdmans), hopefully to be reviewed in the next issue of BSB. Prof Bauckham has in fact spoken directly to the claim of the discovery of Jesus' tomb, and you can read his thoughts as a guest post on the regular blog of Chris Tilling, at <http://www.christilling.de/blog/ctblog.html>—the entry for Thursday 1st March. Slightly less impressed by the complexity of the issue was Tom Wright, quoted in the *Church Times* as having said 'What we have to realize is that it is like looking through a London phone book, and seeing the names John and Mary Smith. There are lots of them, just as in Jewish history these other names were very common.' Meanwhile, those who missed the documentary itself can even read Mark Goodacre's 'live blog' as it was televised (see the entry for 4th March), on his own weblog which contains much good on-going discussion of the whole affair: <http://www.ntgateway.com/weblog/>. (Another source of interest is the Biblical Archaeology Society's coverage: <http://jesustomb.bib-arch.org/>).

## New Journal

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March saw the publication of the first issue of a new twice-yearly journal which will likely be of much interest to many readers of the Grove Biblical Series: the *Journal of Theological Interpretation* (JTI). Editor Joel Green offers this by way of description of the journal: 'Critical biblical scholarship as developed and defined since the mid-eighteenth century has played a significant and welcome role in pressing us to take biblical texts seriously on their own terms and diverse contexts. With the postmodern turn, additional questions have surfaced—including the theological and ecclesial location of biblical interpretation, the significance of canon and creed for biblical hermeneutics, the historical reception of biblical texts, and other more pointedly theological interests. How might we engage interpretively with the Christian Scriptures so as to hear and attend to God's voice? The *Journal of Theological Interpretation* aims to serve these agendas.' You can find this, along with details of the first issue, and many other useful resources for theological interpretation, on the web-site he runs at [http://fc.asburyseminary.edu/~theological\\_interpretation/index.html](http://fc.asburyseminary.edu/~theological_interpretation/index.html). The opening issue includes articles by Richard Hays, Murray Rae, and Walter Moberly. A journal to watch.

## Grove Classics?

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### John Goldingay on the Psalms

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Way back in 1993 John Goldingay wrote the Grove booklet *Praying the Psalms* (Grove Spirituality booklet, S 44). This booklet argued that the Psalms had a key role to play in the life of faith, and in particular that their multi-faceted models of prayer, from world-creating praise through to the articulation of pain, anger and helplessness—

ness, could all offer powerful resources for our own prayer lives, personally and corporately. The thought with which he ended has long served as a quote to focus the issues in helping the Church to engage with the embodied reality of Old Testament spirituality:

I cannot understand how Christians can take a superior stance over against the spirituality of the Jewish Bible. The Psalms make me think not 'Poor Jews that they have this distant legalistic relationship with God,' but 'I wish I related to God the way these Jews did even before Jesus came.'

The booklet has been out of print for some years, though a steady stream of photocopied versions has been sold as students have continued to be encouraged to seek it out. Now it is available in a reformatted version, with a new foreword by the author, as an e-book, from the Grove web-site ([www.grovebooks.co.uk](http://www.grovebooks.co.uk)). For those who subscribe to the Biblical series who may have missed this the first time round, it would be well worth getting hold of it: John Goldingay, *Praying the Psalms* (Revised Online Edition, Grove Books, 2007; ISBN: 1 85174 232 8).

Meanwhile, this reissue coincides with the appearance of the first of three volumes in John Goldingay's own full-scale Psalms commentary. This appears as part of Baker Academic's impressive series, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms*, following Richard Hess on *Song of Songs* (2005), and series editor Tremper Longman III on *Proverbs* (2006). Goldingay gives us *Psalms Volume 1: Psalms 1–41* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006, 639pp; £29.99; ISBN: 978 0 8010 2703 1). Vols 2 and 3 are due in late 2007 and late 2008.

Volume 1 offers us an introduction which reflects Goldingay's perennial desire to combine serious theological reflection with an agenda which is driven by the text rather than any neat systematization of categories which is first brought to the text. On many of the 'issues' which occupy Psalms scholarship he is therefore refreshingly unwilling to be drawn into a vote for or against: the evidence is too messy for that. Thus on history: the Psalms conceal their origins, they presume upon historical events without allowing us to reconstruct those events, but understanding them does not require us to reconstruct Israelite history in any case. On poetry: there is evidence of rhythm but it is inherently irregular. On worship setting: the possible setting of some (many?) Psalms in the celebration of tabernacles is plausible, but neither conclusive nor necessary for interpretation. On spirituality (*cf* the Grove booklet!): his claim that there is not much of an overall canonical structure to the collection of 150 Psalms (against some recent suggestions) reflects the realistic claim that spiritual life with God does not occur in neat seasons of praise, lament or intercession. Overarching all these concerns rings his insistence: 'The Psalms make it possible to say things that are otherwise unsayable' (p 22).

The real strength of the commentary is its deep engagement with the actual text of the Psalms, right down to the level of a patient, fresh and clearly annotated new translation of every Psalm, and a dialogue with the early tradition as well as the giants of the interpretative tradition. The introduction, therefore, really does read like a distillation of the limits of how far the material can be synthesized rather than an opening statement of hermeneutical framework into which all the subsequent texts

will be fitted.

As one might expect, the commentary is also delightfully quotable. Some examples, just from the introduction: 'The balance between protest or expression of pain, and plea or request, is the reverse of that which characterizes Christian prayer. Christians are reticent about telling God things that God presumably knows, though they are then oddly unrestrained about itemizing what god should do even though they recognize that God could work this out' (p 62). 'There is a role to be played by dispassionate analytical theological statements, though I cannot remember what it is' (p 69). 'If the Israelites did not sing the Psalms by a method such as that of rap...they should have done so' (pp 41–42).

Every Psalm is treated by way of translation—interpretation—theological implications. Detailed study of word links, grammatical clues and resonance with other biblical passages suffuses the pages. There is a 10-page glossary of key words and how to handle them on the OT's own terms. When complete, the 3 volume set will be an excellent resource for both the student and the preacher.

## Book Reviews

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The *Two Horizons New Testament Commentary* is a new series from Eerdmans. Two volumes appeared in 2005, on *Colossians* and *Philemon* by Marianne Meye Thompson, and on *Philippians* by Stephen Fowl (ISBN 978 0 8028 2551 3). The aim of the series is to connect systematic theology to biblical studies, by offering a sequential commentary that explores the theological dimensions of the biblical text. If traditional academic exegesis is concerned with the meaning behind the text—the ancient author's context, intention and message—then this kind of theological exegesis is interested in the meaning created by the text—the ideas, the sense of God, and the issues these raise for us who live by the Scriptures. Of course this distinction is not absolute. A theological commentator wants to know what the original author meant, and many a historical exegete will reflect on what the text offers for faithful living today. But this series aims to tilt the balance towards Christian insight, and the historical emphasis necessarily moves a little out of focus.

So Fowl offers an opinion, for example, on what Paul meant by using language of citizenship in 1.27: 'there seems to be an implicit contrast here between Roman citizenship and being a citizen of the gospel of Christ' (p 61). But he goes on to warn us that belonging to an earthly nation should not 'erase the possibility of Christian dissent...Christians will need to discuss and discern together the concrete shape of a common life worthy of the gospel...They have one Lord and serve only one master' (p 62).

In particular, Fowl finds *Philippians* a rich resource for a Christian theology of friendship (pp 207–235). In suffering, in material sharing and generosity, in active concern for unity, in cruciform self-giving, and in joy that transcends normal social expectation and experience, we belong together. The great service Christian friends can offer each other is to help us know our place in God's drama of salvation, and so bring the word of the gospel to bear on our own living. Christian friendship, ac-

ording to Fowl, is a demanding relationship. But it is real, for it is founded on the reality of God's self-giving in Jesus Christ.

Preachers will surely enjoy this sort of commentary. It asks about where the text leads the church. We may look forward to the series expanding.

*John Proctor, Westminster College, Cambridge*

A brief note to mention the dedicated work of Eerdmans in producing The Biblical Resource Series. These are new paperback editions of classic volumes in biblical studies, the latest of which is a translation of Hermann Gunkel's celebrated 1895 traditio-historical work on Genesis 1 and Revelation 12, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*. Translated by K William Whitney Jr, English readers may now breathe a deeply indebted sigh of relief and turn to *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton. A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006, xlii + 442 pp; £21.99; ISBN10: 0 8028 2804 3. ISBN13: 978 0 8028 2804 3). This is not a volume for the busy preacher, and even the translator, in his excellent 15 page introduction, notes that the significance of the work lies less in what is argued (concerning the Babylonian origin of the Hebrew creation/new creation myth) and more in how it is argued. For those interested in asking questions about reigning interpretative paradigms, though, this is a noteworthy resource.

*Richard Briggs, Cranmer Hall, Durham*

## Computer Corner

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All those who have not yet discovered the world of blogs should consider the possibilities they offer of (semi-) virtual community, often with a degree of depth in the interaction which surpasses even the average conference coffee-break. One reason for this, of course, is that the blogger can pause to look up a technical detail in the middle of what looks like an off-the-cuff comment about some recent incident, theory or publication, and that's a lot harder milling around in a crowd holding a plastic cup of tea. We already noted above the posted comment of Richard Bauckham on the Jesus tomb, as one good example.

Would be blog readers can now benefit from, believe it or not, a summary of the best blogs in biblical studies for 2006, compiled by Tyler Williams: <http://biblical-studies.ca/blog/wp/2007/01/09/biblical-studies-carnival-best-of-2006>. This was in turn highlighted by the aforementioned Mark Goodacre, of [www.ntgateway.com](http://www.ntgateway.com) fame.

Among the award-winners for 2006 was Ben Witherington, who posted what BSB editor Mike Thompson described as 'the best succinct translation and exegesis of 1 Tim 2.8-15 that I've seen, and you can read it online in 2 minutes.' It can be found at <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2006/02/literal-renderings-of-texts-of.html>. It's followed by comments by scholars and others who both agree and disagree with the author, and the whole discussion takes further some of the points raised in BSB correspondence last year. (Note that Witherington's own views, minus the blog

interaction, can now be perused on paper in his *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians. Volume 1: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic and Nottingham: Apollos, 2006, 623 pp; ISBN (UK): 978 1 84474 143 4] on pp 217–32).

Meanwhile, Tyndale House in Cambridge continues to provide an excellent service to all those seeking guidance through the maze of what is available (and what is worthwhile) on the web. David Instone-Brewer's latest 'Tyndale Tech' emailing (Jan 2007) discussed 'Searching for academic research on the web', and pointed scholars not just to Google and Google Scholar ('surprisingly useful'), but to a whole range of resources for finding articles and archives, and books and theses. These emails are posted eventually at [www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Tyndale/TTech.htm](http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Tyndale/TTech.htm), where you can sign up to receive them regularly.

## Quote of the Month

A new feature where we showcase some recent pithy thought, wise insight or outrageous over-generalization, for you to pass on to your next church newsletter, ecclesiastical board meeting, or common-room coffee break:

'The staggering popular phenomenon of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* testifies to the level of success that academic interpretive authority brings to bear on egregiously misleading interpretive claims: none at all.' (A K M Adam, *Reading Scripture with the Church* [Baker Academic, 2006] p 23)

...Discuss?

## Grove Biblical Series

This month's Grove booklet (B43) is *Making Sense of the Sermon on the Mount* by the Rev'd John Yieh, Associate Professor of New Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA. Grove is delighted to welcome this contribution from John, whose roots are in Taiwan, but who completed his research in the States, where he has been lecturing for some years.

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