

Biblical Studies Bulletin

Edited by Michael B Thompson—Published Quarterly—Read Religiously—Disposed of Reluctantly—Free to Grove Biblical Subscribers

Contents ————— Issue 44: June 2007

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1 <i>NEWS IN BRIEF</i> | BSB appears; a Tomb with a View; Take this tablet |
| 2 <i>BOOK REVIEWS</i> | Bauckham, Middleton and Tsumura examined |
| 4 <i>BOOK NOTICES</i> | Four new books of interest |
| 5 <i>SOFTWARE REVIEW</i> | The NIGTC fully searchable on computer |
| 6 <i>COMPUTER CORNER</i> | Update for Accordance |

News in Brief —————

Late But not Lost —————

Yes, you read it correctly. This is the June issue, appearing in late July, if not August. I am officially still on sabbatical, and my substitute—a Grove worthy who shall remain unnamed according to the proper NT epistolary style of shaming by not naming (and because he is my wife's boss)—has not been able to produce the goods. So, on the assumption that late is better than never, here goes.

The Tomb of Herod —————

It's old news now but perhaps you haven't heard it: after years of searching, archaeologists have found the tomb of Herod the Great in the area where most scholars have always suspected it should be. Professor Ehud Netzer of the Hebrew University located the tomb at Herodium, one of Herod's palaces built at the top of the cone-shaped hill, near Bethlehem. Although Josephus wrote of the funeral, he did not state the exact location. Unlike King Tut's, Herod's limestone sarcophagus was found in hundreds of bits spread out over the site. The tomb was probably first plundered and destroyed by rebels during the revolt of AD 66-72. As ever, text (<http://tinyurl.com/289lpr>) and photos (<http://tinyurl.com/yv8cqce>) are on the web.

The Tablet Confirming the OT? —————

Among the 130,000 ancient cuneiform tablets in the collection at the British Museum, one carrying a name resembling an insignificant figure mentioned in the Old Testament has been found by Professor Michael Jursa. I want to meet his optometrist. The good news is that unlike some recent finds, the tablet is not a fake and the names are a closer match than their English transliterations (Nabu-sharrussu-ukin on the tablet and Nebo-Sarsekim in Jer 39.3 [NIV; other versions construe the Hebrew

differently because Babylonian names are not easy to sort out. Let's face it, how many of us even know what a Rabmag is?); what matters are the consonants, not the vowels. The bad news is the extravagance of the claims being made by some papers ('proves the Old Testament') and by some individual enthusiasts about its significance. That simply sets up people to bounce the other way. It is a good find; it will not persuade the sceptical (see, eg, <http://tinyurl.com/2en2d4>), but it might set people thinking.

Book Reviews

Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Cambridge/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), xiii + 538 pp; ISBN 0-8028-3162-1). Anything by Richard Bauckham is well-researched, informative and original. This big book is no exception. But it is *exceptional* for its bold thesis that swims against a strong scholarly tide by arguing that our four gospels are largely based on the testimony of eyewitnesses (*autoptai*), and that one of them (John) is written by an eyewitness himself.

In addition to covering the sort of ground we might expect (especially the testimony of Papias), Bauckham offers fresh arguments to support his thesis, including an intriguing case for the use of *inclusio* as an ancient authorial technique for indicating a crucial eyewitness source. So for example, Simon Peter appears near the beginning and end of Mark's gospel as a way of confirming that the testimony is reliable (1.16; 16.7). Likewise, the unnamed disciple who follows in John 1.37f is the 'beloved disciple' who follows in John 21.20. In addition to following Mark's example of *inclusio* with Peter, Luke has his own *inclusio* for a group of women (8.2-3; 24.10) bracketing the bulk of Jesus' ministry.

Drawing on Tal Ilan's *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, Bauckham scrutinizes the appearance and frequency of key names in the gospels, coming to fascinating conclusions and explaining conundrums (including diversity in the evangelists' lists of disciples). Following Gerd Theissen, he makes a case for 'protective anonymity' in the pre-Markan passion; so eg, the naked young man of Mark 14.52 is a source, (that's how we know what Jesus prayed in Gethsemane when his disciples slept), though surprisingly not Mark himself. He goes on to argue that in John's later gospel this need was no longer relevant (hence the names given in John 12.3 and 18.10 to individuals not named in the Markan parallels). I found his treatment of Matthew by comparison relatively thin; more definitely remains to be said.

Bauckham's interaction with form criticism, Scandinavian scholars and James Dunn's recent tome *Jesus Remembered* is valuable in nuancing debates about oral tradition and the role of individual testimony and memorization in giving direction and control to the tradition. His sensitive discussion and application of the unverifiable yet patently truthful nature of the testimony of individual Holocaust survivors to an exceptional event is striking and ingenious.

This is clearly not a rerun of old points from conservatives. Every reader will be left not only enriched by the wealth of detail and originality here, but also occasionally

puzzled (some of the discussion is dense; this *is* an academic book, not written for popular consumption) and sometimes (to say the least) not fully persuaded. To my mind, Bauckham makes a strong case that the author of the fourth gospel is John the beloved disciple, but he argues that this John is the Elder referred to by Papias, not the apostle John the son of Zebedee. I'm looking forward to some pub explorations of this with Richard when he joins us in Cambridge next year. At this point I'm also not persuaded by his case that the author of Matthew was not Matthew-Levi. But I want to hear more!

The Editor

D T Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006; ISBN 0-8028-2359-9). David Tsumura is Professor of Old Testament in Japan Bible Seminary, Tokyo, and an outstanding linguist. This 698 page commentary is evidently not intended for light reading (for which turn instead to J Baldwin or M J Evans), but 1 Samuel raises a host of lexical, historical, geographical and source-critical issues, and Tsumura usually has something sensible to say on all of them. A few useful excurses discuss particular problems in a little more detail (eg the 'evil spirit' sent upon Saul). Those wanting an overview or writing essays will value the substantial introduction, which in addition to the normal topics has a helpful discussion of poetry and poetic prose, and discourse analysis. The latter is a relatively new field of study, and seeks to relate the different kinds of Hebrew verbs to the flow of a passage, exploring especially how the narrator introduces the setting, describes the central event, and then ends the discourse or moves to another one. Working this scheme out through 1 Samuel is a distinctive feature of the commentary and often useful.

My slight hesitation in commending the approach wholeheartedly is that, while useful at an introductory level, I would have liked a more imaginative approach to the wonderful narrative artistry of the book. Here W Brueggemann (Interpretation series) is a far more evocative author, and his breadth also gives his commentary a theological dimension that is harder to find in Tsumura. Brueggemann, though, is necessarily selective and has little on detail, so having both on the shelf would provide an excellent complementary resource for preaching and Bible study.

Philip Jenson, Ridley Hall

J R Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005; 304 p). A good argument may be made that Genesis 1 is the most important chapter in the Bible, and another good one that it might well be the least understood. So this superb discussion of the image of God in Genesis 1 is to be warmly welcomed, especially since it's also an excellent introduction to how to read Genesis 1–11 in its biblical and Near Eastern context. The latter is all important according to Middleton (and I think he's right), because at the heart of this section is a radical, liberating and transformative critique of the royal ideology that dominated Mesopotamian culture in particular. It is the king who was above all called the image of God, but in Genesis 1 it is humanity that is summoned to be God's representative and intermediary of his power and blessing one earth. In other words, it is a power-

ful critique of all empires, whether political, economic or spiritual, that forget who has created us and for what. This is an entirely inadequate summary of a book that taught me new things on practically every page. It is unfortunate that it is published by a little-known press and does not seem widely known. But these days nothing is hidden that cannot be revealed, at least when it comes to books. This gets a five star recommendation from me, albeit a couple of years late.

Philip Jenson, Ridley Hall

Book Notices

Four books are sitting on my desk that deserve attention and I don't have time to finish reading them, so a mention will have to do.

The first is by a dear friend, Professor Markus Bockmuehl, who has recently moved from Scotland to Oxford where he has a chair in New Testament. His *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Studies in Theological Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006; 297pp; ISBN 0-8010-2761-6) is a collection of revised and improved material (some of which has been published before), all of which has been tested in the fires of university senior seminars and other learned contexts. Two chapters stand out for me. The first, on the troubled state of NT scholarship, is a magisterial critique of the current menu of methodology and presuppositions. The polemic here takes no prisoners; this is heady, demanding stuff. The sixth chapter, 'Living memory and Apostolic History', should be read alongside Bauckham's *Eyewitnesses* book for its contribution to an understanding of the depth and breadth of memory in the early Church until the end of the second century. We ignore very early Christian tradition at our peril.

Two other new books treating a common topic are Joseph A Fitzmyer's *The One Who is to Come* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007; xvi +205 pp; ISBN 978-0-8028-4013-4), and Stanley E Porter (ed), *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007; xiv + 268 pp; ISBN 976-0-8028-0766-3).

Fitzmyer is a world-class Roman Catholic scholar and an expert in Aramaic and the Qumran texts. Responding to earlier studies (and especially to Mowinckel's *He That Cometh*) he surveys the OT, LXX, extrabiblical writings of Second Temple Judaism, the NT, and the use of 'Messiah' in the Mishnah, Targums and other Rabbinic writings. He builds the case that the notion of an *eschatological* Messiah emerged only in the 2nd century BC and specifically in Dan 9.25f. He also sees the notion of a suffering Messiah (derived from a concept of a suffering Son of Man) appearing first *and only* in Luke (p 142)! Many will disagree with the latter conclusion whatever they think about his analysis of the OT. I suspect that by narrowing his focus to the term 'Messiah', he has achieved precision, but has also excluded related material. He writes clearly and succinctly, and his book will be an important starting point in future discussions. I would have like to see more interaction with the work of William Horbury.

Stan Porter has edited enough works to cause any bookcase to collapse. This one is a collection of conference papers covering much of the same material as Fitzmyer, with fuller treatment of the NT but nothing on rabbinic sources. It concludes with a final

reflection by Craig A Evans responding briefly to each of the preceding chapters. Not surprisingly, Howard Marshall's chapter on Jesus as Messiah in Mark and Matthew appears to contradict directly Fitzmyer's conclusion regarding a suffering Messiah. Despite Howard's contribution, I suspect that like most collections of conference papers, this volume may be a curate's egg.

Finally, using editor's prerogative I want to commend a very readable book that is more about theology than the Bible (although we all sought to be faithful!): Ben Quash and Michael Ward (eds), *Heresies and How to Avoid Them: Why it Matters What Christians Believe* (London: SPCK/Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2007; xi + 148 pp; ISBN 978-0-281-05843-3). This is a collection of edited sermons that a group of Cambridge (and ex-Cambridge) folk delivered at Peterhouse College, together with a few added essays. Yours truly preached the first chapter, on Arianism. My texts were Phil 2 and John 20. Find your theology here!

Software Review

Helen Brown from Accordance kindly sent me their New International Greek Testament Commentary module for review. At first, I had fun experimenting with it; soon the fun turned into serious and regular use! The 13-volume (thus far) series includes some of the finest scholarship there is, represented by senior exegetes such as A C Thiselton, R T France, I Howard Marshall, FF Bruce, James Dunn and John Nolland. For those who can afford it (individual commentaries can be purchased separately, and there is a discount for buying the set), this puts the full text of one of the best resources on the Greek text of the NT at your fingertips, with all the power and speed of the Accordance search and display engine—you don't have to fiddle with pdf format!

In addition to English text you can search for Greek and Hebrew words across the set, as well as for manuscripts (e.g. p⁴⁶) and of course, biblical references. The biblical reference search casts a wide net; looking for Mark 3.5 brings up its occurrences within a range (e.g. Mark 2.1-3.6). As new volumes are added to the series, they can be easily added to a search of the set. I particularly liked the way that every biblical reference is a hot link, so that simply passing the cursor over the reference instantly brings up the Greek or Hebrew text in a details window; with ranges you only get the first verse, but if you want to see it all, simply click on the reference.

One of the strengths of Accordance is the quality of the coding to ensure that modules you buy accurately represent the printed text. It can lead to some surprises; for example, the Greek text in Marshall on Luke is in italics in contrast to other commentaries in the series because that's the way the books were printed. I found very, very few errors (errant forms of *oida* and *oinos*, and only in Beale on Revelation), and these I'm sure will be corrected in an update before long. One frustration for scholars will be the lack of page numbering, something that is correctable (their *Anchor Bible Dictionary* module has it), but no doubt time consuming in coding. I hope it appears in a future version.

Other commentary series are also available for Accordance, including the Word Biblical Commentary, the Pillar NT Commentary, and many resources at a more basic

level. Accordance runs native on Apple Macs, and can run on a PC via a free emulation programme. For more information, see the web site (www.accordancebible.com).

It is hard to overstate the significance of the ability to search easily and quickly across a range of commentaries for different authors' comments on a given text, Greek, Hebrew or English word, or construction. This is something that clearly marks out electronic versions of sets of resources as the way of the future. It is expensive, and in fairness, I should point out that one of Accordance's competitors also offer the NIGTC; Logos charges \$660 for twelve of the volumes, Accordance charges \$499 for all thirteen. Given the strength of the pound sterling, the Accordance module is especially good value for British scholars.

Computer Corner

- The good people behind the best Bible study software programme on earth have been busy again. Accordance version 7.3 is now available, bringing further font refinements to software that is both easy to use for beginners and powerful enough for hard-to-please academics. New features in 7.2 included the ability to import Bible texts by the user (many are freely available in text only format, and missionaries working with obscure languages will find it useful), improved layout of controls (including new 'prior' and 'next' arrows to help you navigate through links and windows), a number of new options for exporting text and references, plus other minor features. The update is free to owners of 7.0 and above. To read about people's experience with the import feature have a look at their blog site (www.accordancebible.com/blog).

Grove Biblical Series

This month's title, *John's Jesus* (B44), refers not to its prolific author (our own John Proctor), but of course to the fourth gospel. Anyone who has read one of Proctor's previous volumes on the gospels in our series (B32, B37, B41) will know how clearly, thoughtfully and helpfully he writes. This one's another keeper!

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.

Contributions to BSB should be sent to: The Editor, *Biblical Studies Bulletin*, at the Grove address below (or via email to: mbt2@cam.ac.uk). Unsolicited material is welcome, but it cannot be returned.

GROVE BOOKS LIMITED

RIDLEY HALL RD CAMBRIDGE CB3 9HU

Tel: 01223 46 47 48 Fax: 01223 46 48 49