

Biblical Studies Bulletin

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New Resources —————

An unusual new reference work is worthy of note: *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, G K Beale and D A Carson (eds) (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007; ISBN 978 1 84474 196 0, hb £29.99, xxviii+1239pp). It does what it says in the title: working through each NT quotation of or allusion to the OT, and generally dividing the discussion into sections on the NT context of the reference; the OT context of the texts referred to; a comparison with Jewish handling of the text at the time of Jesus; textual factors (where the OT in Greek is in view); the purpose or nature of the specific use of the OT; and then the theological use made of the text. Many entries (the most helpful ones, I felt) work explicitly with this arrangement, a few read more like mini-commentaries with one eye on the OT question (such as the one on Acts, though it does include helpful parallel texts of Amos 9 and Acts 15). Entries range from 150 (large) pages for a gospel to one paragraph on Philemon.

This is a refreshing approach which neatly complements many conceptual studies of the theme. Here all the data are laid out on the table and theorizing is not the focus. Any careful reader will have their disagreements, or will wonder why a particular allusion is not included, but the contributors (including Craig Blomberg, Rikk Watts, Howard Marshall and Frank Thielman) still cover a huge range of material. I have particularly enjoyed using the book ‘in reverse,’ as it were—tracing an OT book through the index and following the various discussions of it scattered through this volume. The scriptural use of Scripture is very much a focus of attention these days—this resource will allow all to engage with it, and offers in the process what may be fresh light for many on familiar texts.

Surely one of the standard questions which students of the Bible ask (or are likely to be asked in due course) is ‘what Bible translation should I use?’ Most ‘guides to Bible translations’ struggle to avoid simply mirroring the writer’s preferences. What I like about the new volume by Gordon D Fee and Mark L Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation*

for *All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007; ISBN 978 0 310 27876 4; pb £6.99, 170pp) is that it is a discussion of criteria for evaluating Bible translations, reproducing much wisdom from the two writers' earlier works. It is packaged to look like part of a matching set with Fee's admirable introductory texts on *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* and *How to Read the Bible Book-by-Book*, which are still great books to put in the hands of a beginner, even if there are other perspectives which they will need to encounter quite quickly. The new book looks at the spectrum from dynamic equivalence through to word-for-word literalism, covering idioms, metaphors, culture, gender and even a whole chapter on 'the Greek genitive'—the problematic 'of' construction which so many translations reduce to one out of various possibilities. It talks great common sense, deflating some of the outrageous claims common to the topic of Bible translation. I was depressed to realize that there are several new translations out there which I didn't know about, but encouraged (I hope not too much) to find that the recommendations, when they finally come on the last page, pointed to familiar friends: the NRSV, the TNIV, and an honourable mention for the NLT. I would recommend this book for every church library and bookstall—it would be a good way to get people into thinking about Bible translation a bit more.

Richard S Briggs, *Cranmer Hall, Durham*

The Scripture and Hermeneutics Project

Way back in BSB 23 (March 2002), Craig Bartholomew wrote about the eight-volume series of books being published under the imprint of the 'Scripture and Hermeneutics Seminar.' With the arrival of *The Bible and the University* (David Lyle Jeffrey and C Stephen Evans (eds), (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007) ISBN 978 0 310 23418 0, xx + 328 pp), earlier this year, this epic series is finally at an end.

Conceived as an attempt to renew biblical interpretation in the academy, with one eye on wider social and cultural horizons of interpretation, the series has offered a wealth of insights, along with the inevitable unevenness which accompanies any multi-author project. The full set of volumes, each £19.99 in hb and published by Paternoster in the UK, is: *SHS1 – Renewing Biblical Interpretation* (Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, Karl Möller eds, 2000, ISBN 0 85364 034 3, xxxi + 368pp), *SHS2 – After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, Karl Möller eds, 2001, ISBN 1 84227 066 4, xxxvi + 425pp), *SHS3 – A Royal Priesthood? A Dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan* (Craig Bartholomew, Jonathan Chaplin, Robert Song, Al Wolters eds, 2002, ISBN 1 84227 067 2, xxiv + 446pp), *SHS4 – 'Behind' the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation* (Craig Bartholomew, C Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, Murray Rae eds, 2003, ISBN 1 84227 068 0, xxi + 553pp), *SHS5 – Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller, Robin Parry eds, 2004, ISBN 1 84227 069 9, xxiii + 496pp), *SHS6 – Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (Craig Bartholomew, Joel Green, Anthony C Thiselton eds, 2005, ISBN 1 84227 070 2, xxii + 484pp), *SHS7 – Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (Craig

Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Parry, Christopher Seitz, Al Wolters eds, 2006, ISBN 1 84227 071 0, xvi + 445pp), *SHS8—The Bible and the University*—as above.

By my reckoning, what we have here is something like 3700 pages, 150 separate articles, and the most brightly coloured section of my bookshelf with its distinctive multicoloured covers.

What might a preacher or exegete learn from these volumes? Undeniably, at times, the discussion has succumbed to the temptation to keep hermeneutics as its own self-sustaining topic of discussion. But when the biblical text is in view, some pieces are of tremendous value: Karl Möller has excellent articles on Amos in vols 1, 2 and 4; Al Wolters writes on Zechariah in 1 and 5; there are several sharp articles on Romans in 3; vol 4 (which opens with the weakest essays of the series by philosophers simply uninformed about biblical interpretation) closes with some fine pieces on Amos, the book of the twelve (Chris Seitz), and Exodus 14 (Neil B MacDonald); Andrew Lincoln contributes a biblical theology essay on Hebrews to 5; vol 6 is of course all about reading a specific book in the wider biblical context and should take its place alongside Luke commentaries for anyone preaching through that gospel; while the second half of 7 is all about canonical OT interpretation with good essays on the Psalms (Gordon Wenham) and wisdom (Tremper Longman III) included.

A personal opinion: vols 5 and 7 are both illuminating collections of essays in the area of biblical theology / canonical approaches and will reward any reader interested in preaching. All the others offer something of interest, but the scholarly focus is perhaps strongest with the last book, much of which is taken up with issues in American academia concerning the possibilities for Christian integrity within disciplines. However, I warmed to William Abraham's brightly 'apocalyptic' telling of the story of the rise of biblical criticism as a discipline, which includes the line that 'the real disaster is the loss of the gospel in the church,' a disaster which occurs downstream of the endless academic penchant for fine-tuning this or that proposal. Elsewhere there is good reflection on 'Reading Habits, Scripture and the University' by John Sullivan, but also a good deal of worrying about how to recover Scripture across the academic curriculum. This volume has much of interest to Christian academics, but nevertheless seems a slightly inconclusive end to such a large-scale and creative project.

Some further information and articles are available on-line at www.sahs-info.org, and there is a much more detailed retrospective review of the series by Mark Elliott at the www.scripturetheology.net blog

Richard S Briggs, Cranmer Hall, Durham

Comments on Commentaries—

This issue's survey comes from Heath Thomas, Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Heath recently completed his own studies on Lamentations at the University of Gloucester.

Lamentations

There has been a good deal of confusion about how to appropriate Lamentations as

Christian Scripture. Within its own horizons, it may be characterized as a text for the people of God to pray together after the destruction of Judah in 587 BCE. It invites God's people to cry out to him about sin, suffering, divine absence, enemies, and especially the plight of suffering children. In this historical setting, Lamentations functions especially as prayer, and this may serve as a model of appropriation in the church.

A number of more recent commentaries take up this prayer theme. The most recent commentary is that of **Paul House** (WBC, 2005), who argues that the prayers and tears of Lamentations are grounded primarily in the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, thereby setting the book within the covenantal history of Israel. The covenant emphasis enables him to weave the darker threads of destruction (as well as the hope of restoration) in the book in terms of covenant breach (and covenant renewal at the hand of God). It also grounds his analysis of the most well-known verses in the book, Lam 3.20–24, and funds his understanding of the parenetic, wisdom-like section of Lam 3.25–39. The commentary is attractive because of its theological concerns, attention to exegetical detail, and synchronic approach.

House builds upon **J Renkema's** magisterial commentary (HCOT, 1998) which, too, underlines the covenantal qualities apparent in Lamentations. Renkema is devoted to structural analysis and correctly emphasizes the role that repetition plays in constructing the argument of the poetry. While his focus is—as the series implies—historical, he believes (as does House) the composition of the book is completed within the exile, and its theology is rich as prayer. The centre of the book for him, is, in fact, reflective prayer: a combination of Lam 3.17, 50: 'Cast out from peace is my soul; I am forced to forget the good / until he looks down from heaven and sees, YHWH from the heavens.' Renkema highlights as well the confrontational aspect of prayer—even protest against God's activity which those praying Lamentations would certainly have embodied.

The commentaries of **F W Dobbs-Allsopp** (*Interpretation*, 2002) and **Kathleen M O'Connor** (*Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, Orbis, 2002) emphasize the role of protest prayer in Lamentations. Dobbs-Allsopp's concern for poetics, genre, and theology shape his analysis and ground his view that Lamentations constructs an anti-theodicy—a refusal to justify God's judgment against Judah and Jerusalem and protest against it. O'Connor works from a perspective more akin to feminist hermeneutics, though it cannot be distinctively identified as a feminist critique of Lamentations but rather a work with feminist concerns. She reads with and against the grain of the text in a way that is both insightful and disturbing at places. In both commentaries, however, there is a concern for theology and theological construction from the ancient text.

The most balanced work in recent years, with an eye to stylistics and then theology, is **Adele Berlin's** commentary (OTL, 2002). She blends her considerable skills as an exegete with theological sensitivity, and highlights how poetics fund theological portraiture in Lamentations. The same kind of tenor is found in **Iain Provan's** commentary (NCB, 1991). Both works remain useful for interpretation.

A word should be said of a seminal (and relatively recent) publication in Lamentations scholarship: **Claus Westermann's** *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* (ET: T&T Clark, 1994). It was here that the push to recognize Lamentations as a prayer text became focused to a great degree, as he highlighted the importance of Lamentations 1, 2, 4, and 5 (as well as the lament portions of chapter 3) beyond the rather myopic scholarly concentration upon Lam 3.19–39. His commentary surveys the past and

prepares the way for more recent contributions, and is a must read, though some may prefer a more theologically-focused rather than distinctive historical-critical commentary.

This is forthcoming in **Robin Parry's** commentary in the Two Horizons OT Commentary series. Parry explicitly focuses upon Lamentations as Christian Scripture and thereby moves beyond traditional historical-critical concerns (without abandoning them) towards theological understanding of the book as a text for the church. He blends sensitive and careful analysis of the poetry of Lamentations with theological analogies between the persona of Zion and Christ, as well as the strongman of Lamentations 3 and Christ. In this way, the prayers of Lamentations become an *entrée* into understanding the person and work of Jesus. This Christological focus is most welcome, and Parry's contribution will be a helpful resource for preaching and teaching this difficult book in the church.

Heath Thomas, Wake Forest, NC

Book Reviews

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) ISBN 978 0 8028 4021 9, xx+315pp, pb £13.99

This book by a well known and respected scholar of the Hebrew Bible (and especially of the prophetic texts) looks at how the book of Isaiah was used by Jewish and Christian communities in late Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. It includes chapters on the influence of Isaiah on the development of Jewish sectarianism, Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Isaiah in Matthew's gospel as well as a number of thematic studies, tracing key Isaianic concepts and titles such as 'the Servant of the Lord' in their re-use and reinterpretation by later Jewish and Christian contexts. Blenkinsopp is particularly interested in the contribution that various interpretations of Isaiah made to 'the legitimizing, grounding, and shaping of dissident movements' which arose in the period between the 5th century BCE and 2nd century CE (p xv). Some of his conclusions need to be treated with caution since the author does have a tendency to make confident assertions about matters that are, in reality, speculative (eg the influence of other 'legends' about the defeat of Sennacherib on the descriptions of the prophet Isaiah himself, p 36). Despite this, the book is a far-ranging study, which draws on a wealth of background information as well as in-depth textual analysis to present a detailed and fascinating interpretation history of the book of Isaiah.

Hilary Marlow, Faraday Institute of Science and Religion, Cambridge

Brian S Rosner, *Greed as Idolatry. The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007) ISBN 978 0 8028 3374 7

The author of *Understanding Paul's Ethics* and other valuable works, Brian Rosner goes deep to explore just what is at stake in the strong words, 'greed, which is idolatry' (Col 3.5; see also Eph 5.5). His introductory survey of the history of Christian interpretation helpfully clarifies variant views; did Paul mean that (1) greed is as bad as idolatry, (2) leads to idolatry, (3) entails the worship of the demon or god of mam-

mon, (4) is slavery imposed by the economic system, (5) involves forbidden service and obedience to wealth, (6) involves inordinate love and devotion to wealth, or (7) involves misplaced trust and confidence in the latter? Is the greed here (*pleonexia*) sexual in nature? (Rosner: no). Does it involve oppression and violence? (not necessarily). What is the meaning of idolatry? ('an attack on God's exclusive right to our love and trust').

In his quest, Rosner embarks on a mountain climb (more like a swift hike) through Old Testament, Qumran, Rabbinic and other Jewish texts before turning to the NT evidence. In a nutshell, his conclusion is that '*the greedy are those with a strong desire to acquire and keep for themselves more and more money and possessions, because they love, trust, and obey wealth rather than God*' (p 129, his emphasis). The emphasis is on 'more' and on misplaced love, trust and obedience. This is a fine study (a bit academic though for many readers, yet not thorough enough for some academics), but I wonder if two contributing themes might deserve more attention: the notion of coveting as fundamental to sin, and the profound significance of thanking and glorifying God (the failure to do which results in idolatry; Rom 1.21). In any case, the application remains a challenge to us all.

Michael B Thompson, Ridley Hall, Cambridge

Grove Biblical Series

This month's Grove booklet (B49) is by Grove regular John Proctor. Following up his series of four books on each of the four gospels, he brings us *Acts of God: The Message and Meaning of the Book of Acts*. Rumours that John will be producing a complete set of 27 booklets on the entire NT canon are, however, unfounded.

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