

attributed? In the latter, the general historical trustworthiness of the Synoptics is assumed (66). Blomberg is very rigorous in asking these questions in each passage under study, right down to the small details. The result is a compelling argument for the historical reliability of John's Gospel, even if one chooses to differ with him in matters of exegesis or theology here and there.

This is truly a seminal work which deserves broad attention in the field of NT studies. Its rigor and depth should merit a serious response from critical scholarship, which has been notoriously skeptical of the historical reliability of this Gospel. Students and teachers of Johannine studies in particular cannot afford to be ignorant of this work and its challenging conclusions.

Those who read this work, however, need to be intelligent about the issues in Gospel criticism, for Blomberg does not explain things for neophytes. He assumes that the reader has knowledge of the critical issues and addresses them directly, without explanation. If the reader is unfamiliar with these issues, he or she may be left "wandering in the wilderness." In other words, this is a commentary for the well informed, not for the average layperson. It is also not a homiletical commentary by any means. It does not address the usual issues for which one normally selects a commentary, to exposit the meaning of the text and make application. Everything serves the primary purpose of the work, to establish the historical reliability of the Gospel against criticism that would place its reliability in doubt. For that purpose, I highly recommend this volume.

Edwin Reynolds

Broyles, Craig C., ed. *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001. 272 pp.

Craig Broyles is associate professor of religious studies at Trinity Western University. This work is a compilation of nine essays on exegesis by leading scholars in the field. The first essay, by Broyles himself, "Interpreting the Old Testament: Principles and Steps" (13-62), briefly examines the nature of the Bible. He believes that the "means we use to interpret an object depend on its nature and function" (13). He then surveys eight steps that are vital in the exegetical process. He does exegesis of Isa 41:21-29 to illustrate each step.

David W. Baker deals with the "Language and Text of the Old Testament" (63-83). In clear and simple language he accomplishes his objective of exploring the implications of Hebrew and Aramaic as the languages God used to reveal Himself since language is the vehicle with which "people express their worldview" (65). Baker insists that it is necessary to determine exactly the meaning of the original text before translating it into modern languages. He then discusses principles for doing textual criticism (69-77), followed by several examples which illustrates these principles (77-83).

In "Reading the Old Testament as Literature" (85-123), V. Philips Long says, "The Old Testament *requires* a literary approach" (86). In light of this, the exegete must listen to the text well. This requires cooperation, that is, taking the Bible on its own terms (91-92), as well as linguistic competence (98-104) and literary competence (104-121). Using 1 Sam 9-11, Long demonstrates a basic plan for reading the OT as literature.

After succinctly weaving through decades of debate on issues such as Israelite origins, the rise of the monarchy, and how we should read the OT narratives, John Bimson ("Old Testament History and Sociology," 125-55) explores the interrelationship between history and exegesis (138-45) as well as that between sociology and exegesis (145-48). Using the book of Amos, he illustrates the use of several sociological approaches. In this way, he accomplishes his initial objective: "Exploring the historical and sociological background of an Old Testament text is a vital aspect of understanding its world" (125).

In the middle chapter of this seminal book, Craig Broyles contends that "a passage also belongs to generations of believing communities who are defined by shared traditions and sacred texts" (157). Hence, he has entitled this essay, "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon" (157-75). A tradition—"any belief or custom passed on from generation to generation" (158)—may center around "notable persons, events, places, institutions, symbols, or rituals" (159). OT writers appealed to these traditions by way of quotations, allusions, and echoes. Using key passages and personalities, Broyles illustrates this intertextuality. His point is "that biblical writers intentionally use traditions known within their communities" (171) and these traditions were "joined into the same written corpus" (*ibid.*) such that passages may comment on each other. This makes "the Bible's unity all the more remarkable" (*ibid.*).

Using passages from each division of the Hebrew Bible, Elmer A. Martens ("The History of Religion, Biblical Theology, and Exegesis," 177-99), illustrates the usefulness of understanding the disciplines of the history of Israelite religion and OT theology. For him, these two "are integral to exegesis" (177). The first, using information from the Bible itself and archaeology, tells us about "Israel's religious life" (*ibid.*). The contribution of the second, as "a subset of biblical theology, is to present a theological framework for the Old Testament" (180).

Richard S. Hess, in "Ancient Near East Studies" (201-20), deals with the importance of grasping "the cultural context in which the Bible was written" (202) as a way for understanding the meaning of the text. Since many disciplines are involved, Hess discusses a common-sense approach that utilizes several principles which would enable one to handle this discipline. The most profitable part of this chapter is the section dealing with general resources (208-20) that will doubtless aid the exegete in his or her comprehension of this vast field.

Using a variety of texts from Genesis and Exodus, Paul Edward Hughes deals with "Compositional History: Source, Form, and Redaction Criticism" (221-44). Admittedly, no new ground is broken here in terms of methodology. What is

useful, however, is the excellent precis of the historical development of each of these criticisms (224-40). And one cannot help but be moved by the report of Julius Wellhausen's lament of not satisfying the needs of his students (244).

The final essay, written by Jonathan R. Wilson, deals with "Theology and the Old Testament" (245-64). He calls for the theologian to be not distant but intimate with the OT, since it is "indispensable to us today" (246). Realizing the enormity of the task, Wilson deals with practical and theoretical obstacles to blending the two realities, but remains with "the conviction that theology is for life" (254). Wilson presents a fascinating discussion when dealing with the classical "what it meant-what it means" tension in biblical scholarship. He identifies several problems with this approach (255-58) and proposes a replacement approach, called "this is that," derived from Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:16). He argues,

"This is that" calls biblical scholars to be so formed by the Bible—by the biblical world, we might say—that they see that world present today. This scheme calls theologians to see our present situation through the eyes of scripture so that they see God working today. This leads us back to my call for an imaginative-practical view of the nature of doctrine and the work of theology (258).

He closes by using Gen 15 and Amos 5-6 as illustrations of this approach.

The book culminates with a useful Scripture Index (265-68) and Subject Index (269-72).

I highly recommend this book for scholars, pastors, and seminary students, for several reasons:

1. It follows a logical flow and pattern of ideas. In fact, each exegetical step that was briefly discussed in the first essay is covered in detail in subsequent essays.

2. Emphasis is placed on "how to" and not on mere theoretical discussion. Each contributor clearly explicates how that particular exegetical step is to be done by using examples from the OT.

3. The book certainly follow the rigors of excellent research and scholarship with an abundance of footnotes and sources from which the eager student may mine a wealth of knowledge. Further, sometimes scholarship is dull, but the writing here is fresh and interesting, using alliteration and other poetic devices that captivate the attention of the reader.

4. It holds a high view of Scripture, debunking minimalism (153-55) and seeing the Bible as sacred, inspired, and authoritative (243). It urges one to use "interpretive caution" instead of arrogance (224) as one encounters not merely the language of the OT but the God of the OT.

Kenneth D. Mulzac