

phetic/apocalyptic genre as can be seen in the very brief three page (pp. 110–12) discussion of this relatively large biblical genre. Even what would seem to be the very compatible genre of narration proves challenging and perplexing by the vast array of equally valid possible interpretations, as demonstrated in the authors' discussion of (what they term) the "Priestly Creation Story" (pp. 117–24). In this case "scientific and technological ways of thinking" (p. 122) seem to be categorizing the text as myth in order to open the text to symbolic or metaphoric interpretation. When the authors ask: "Do we hear them the same way they were heard in ancient Israel and the early Church?" (p. 135), the question seems to be more of a question of the impact on the audience rather than a question of content and meaning. The authors strive to recreate the sense and form of a passage but this does not seem to have much to do with its original meaning. Interaction with more modern theories of linguistics such as Wilson and Sperber's *Relevance Theory* and its impact on translation theory in Gutt's work would have been useful in the formulation of a methodology for incarnational translation. A more balanced methodological framework would go a long way toward making user-friendly incarnational translation also authoritative. As we move away from the older hermeneutical methods we will need a well-thought out faith-based twenty-first century hermeneutic in order to avoid the chaotic, spiritually dark days of the judges in which "everyone did as he saw fit" (Jdg 21:25).

Chantal J. Klingbeil

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

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*The Colossian Hymn in Context: An Exegesis in Light of Jewish and Greco-Roman Hymnic and Epistolary Conventions*, by Matthew E. Gordley. WUNT [2. Reihe] 228. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007. Pp. ix + 295. ISBN 978-3-16-149255-6. Paper. €59.00.

There is a growing interest in the study of Col 1:15–20, evidenced by the extensive literature reviewed in this volume (pp. 3–26). The scale of investigation that Gordley undertakes in this volume has never been attempted before. This book is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation done at the University of Notre Dame under the supervision of David Aune (with James VanderKam, Gregory Sterling, and Jerome Neyrey as committee members). The author combines comparative, form-critical, and rhetorical analytical methods in this study (p. 26) and divides the volume into five chapters. The main thrust of this monograph is an investigation of the cultural, religious, literary, and epistolary contexts of the hymn of Col 1:15–20. It therefore takes into account the Greco-Roman and Jewish backgrounds

and the literary locus of the hymn within the overall structure of the epistle (p. 1).

Chapter one is an evaluation of scholarly attempts to come to grips with the import of the hymn in Col 1:15–20 (pp. 3–26). A working definition offered by Gordley accommodates the various types of ancient hymns such as: prose, metrical, cultic, didactic, liturgical, and philosophical hymns (pp. 32–33). This wide spectrum of categories has generated an intensive debate on the nature of the hymn in Colossians 1:15–20 (p. 3). The author sets out to prove that the passage under study depicts “a hybrid of Jewish and Greco-Roman expressions of praise that can be considered a philosophical prose hymn” (p. 39).

In chapter two the author traces the use of hymns of praise in the Hebrew Bible. Gordley identifies two specific hymns (Ps 33 and Prov 8), as a background for Col 1:15–20 (pp. 57–73). This claim marks an important contribution that Gordley makes with strong supporting evidence. He also lists twelve early Jewish hymns from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha for comparison. A strong element of convergence between Col 1:15–20 and the hymns of the Second Temple period is their “focus on mediators and agents of God” (p. 80). Gordley opts for treating Qumran literature separately from other Second Temple hymns. He lists three reasons for doing so, the main difference being that the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha couch these hymns in literary texts whereas in Qumran literature they are used within a liturgical setting (p. 86). The rest of the chapter seems to deviate from its stated aim, that is, to compare these hymns with Col 1:15–20 (p. 90). For example, the author admits that Philo and Josephus do not have any hymns to be included in the analysis (p. 105). This seems to render the heading “Hymns in the Writings of Philo and Josephus” irrelevant for this section (pp. 105–9).

The third chapter has as its purpose to analyze the hymnic praise of the deity in Greco-Roman literature (p. 111). In his analysis of the rhetorical handbooks, Gordley concludes that they portray how “conventional hymn should be written” (p. 123). The limitation of these handbooks for assessing hymns is that they exclude features like “the style of the hymn, or even the rhythm of the hymn” (p. 123). Therefore, according to Gordley, assessing the hymns by using the rhetorical handbooks may not yield the best results. The author further observes that the rules and formulae presented in the rhetorical handbooks were adapted by orators and writers to meet their needs and circumstances (p. 124). In this sense, the handbooks may not give an accurate picture of the way hymns functioned in community life. The author also observes that there is a general consensus that Greek hymns have the following constituent parts: invocation, praise, and prayer, provid-

ing a number of examples of this pattern (p. 127). However, Gordley admits that the survey he provides is of a general nature and does not meet the required level for effective comparison with Col 1:15–20 (p. 133). The analysis of the Homeric hymns, Pindar's Odes, Testimonies to Asclepius, the Prose Hymns of Aristides, and Isis Aretalogies shows some striking similarities and also reveals some marked differences when compared with the Colossian hymn. The fact that the hymns are composed over several centuries may present a problem in the comparative study that Gordley pursues in this volume. Another problem that has been cited against the use of such hymns with reference to the background of Colossians is the attitude that was displayed toward them. For example, the Homeric hymns were detested even in Classical and Hellenistic contexts (p. 135). Therefore the crucial question is whether they would have any influence on Colossians. No convincing evidence is provided for any specific influence of the Homeric Hymns on the Colossian hymn. The attempts made by Gordley to establish a connection by form and length are unconvincing (p. 136). Even the fact of similarities in content, as Gordley argues the points of convergence, appear to be a bit stretched in this reader's view (p. 135).

Chapter four analyzes Col 1:15–20 using a form-critical method (p. 170). Gordley addresses the question of pre-existing materials used by New Testament writers and notes that the majority of critical scholars would accept this concept. On the other hand he acknowledges that there is a minority view that cannot be ignored which, even proposes that the form-critical method itself be abandoned. The author gives a well-balanced argument that takes accounts of both views, proposing the use of other methods, like rhetorical and literary methods, to make up for some of the inadequacies of the form-critical method (p. 176). The assessment of the forms of hymns made by the author using the form-critical method may be called into question in light of the limitations that have already been acknowledged. Gordley further notes that the Colossian hymn does not follow the conventions of Greek poetry (p. 183). He further observes that the hymn is structured in a pattern rather than depicts Semitic poetry, even though it is written in Greek (p. 197). Therefore, the hymn shares features of both Jewish and Greek hymnody (p. 203). The analysis of the content of the hymn is done succinctly by the author (pp. 203–29). Gordley concludes that the hymnic features suggest a philosophical intention that can be explained within the context of Jewish thought (p. 230). However, the author does not explain further what he means by "philosophy." An explanation is particularly important when the term is used to refer to Jewish literature or thought.

In Chapter five, Gordley argues that the hymn is placed in the context of a "philosophical paraenetic discourse in epistolary form" (p. 231), engaging both ancient and modern rhetorical methods. He cites the limitations of the

epistolary theory (pp. 232–38) and further attempts to justify the use of modern theories of rhetoric, claiming that the “modern theories of rhetoric are useful to the extent that they provide a framework for evaluating the persuasive impact of a text” (p. 238). Furthermore, the author asserts, the modern theories of rhetoric make it possible to work *behind* the text and discover the intentions of the author (p. 238). A question may be raised as to the extent to which one may stay within the constraints of the text with this method. Going *behind* the text may eventually lead to going *beyond* the text. A significant contribution that Gordley makes in this chapter is the offering of a demonstration of how the contents of the hymn feature in the rest of the epistle. Table 5.2 summarizes his findings and represents a helpful tool for the study of Col 1:15–20 (pp. 265–66).

In his conclusion, Gordley admits that the “original function” of the hymn cannot be recovered (p. 269). He finds the hymn to have a didactic function and to set the stage for arguments and exhortations that follow in the subsequent chapters. Another angle of exploration open to biblical scholars is the theology of the hymn. Gordley dedicates 27 pages to examining the content of the hymn without highlighting its theological import. He fails to recognize the contribution of, or even acknowledge, the work of Andrew T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn (*The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]), who state on page 23 that “the chief focus of theological interest in Colossians is the hymn of 1:15–20 and the use which the author makes of it.” This omission, however, does not in any way diminish the contribution that Gordley has made in building a foundation on which biblical theology may stand.

Gordley’s extensive research is a milestone not only in the study of Colossians but in the approach to hymnic texts in the New Testament. Even those who may not accept some aspects of his work may build on it. This book will be of interest to biblical scholars and theologians in their study of Christology in Colossians and the New Testament in general.

Michael Sokupa

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

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*Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible*, by Gerald A. Klingbeil. Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 1. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007. Pp. xiv + 304. ISBN 978-1-57506-801-5. Hardcover. US\$39.50.

This book, written after a decade of careful research, is a product of cultural and methodological “cross-pollination” (p. 1), as implied in the introduction. In his introductory chapter (pp. 1–4), Klingbeil invites his readers into the new field of ritual studies, by describing how deeply this book was