

## CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

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*Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, by Christopher A. Beetham. BINS 96. Leiden: Brill, 2008. Pp. xviii + 342. ISBN 978-90-04-17081-0. Hardcover. US\$ 189.00.

Christopher Beetham was at the time of the publication of this volume Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at the Evangelical Theological College and simultaneously Assistant Professor of New Testament at the Ethiopia Graduate School of Theology, both institutions located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This volume is a slightly revised and expanded edition of his Ph.D. dissertation, completed at Wheaton College Graduate School.

Past studies have focused on OT quotations in the NT (p. 1). It is only recently that scholars have begun to recognize allusions and echoes of the Hebrew Bible in the NT. This significant stride calls for a clearly defined criteria and method. Beetham breaks new ground in this new wave in Pauline studies because his volume is not preceded by any monograph or journal article that explores the use of the OT in Colossians (pp. 1–2).

This book is divided into 14 chapters with helpful appendices that provide charts with summaries and additional data. A selection of bibliographic material apart from the elaborate footnotes is provided. Sets of indexes are also annexed at the end of the book.

Chapter one introduces the subject and outlines the history of research with reference to OT allusions and echoes in Colossians. These range from early and sketchy references to more recent and extensive lists (pp. 2–8).

Chapter two introduces the reader to a dilemma that all researchers have to come to terms with in dealing with allusions and echoes: a choice between an author-oriented or reader-oriented approach (p. 12). On the one hand, the audience- or reader-oriented approach poses the question whether the audience would have recognized an allusion proposed by a researcher (p. 13). Beetham in this volume, however, aims at orienting his argument in the direction of an author-oriented approach (p. 13). The au-

thor opts for the literary-critical method which is usually presupposed by an audience-oriented approach (p. 14).

Beetham employs the historical-critical and literary-critical methods as tools but claims to disregard their presuppositions (p. 15). Beetham, however, seems to avoid the use of the term "intertextuality." This may be because intertextuality tends to be text-focused not author-focused. Intertextuality has been defined by Susan Hylen (*Allusion and Meaning in John 6* [BZNT 137; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005], 50) as "a feature of texts; it is a way of understanding how texts intersect ... on the other hand allusion is a device of a text, a specific means of establishing relations with other texts." This demonstrates that there is a need to clarify the relationship between intertextuality and allusions and echoes, particularly in the light of Beetham's author-oriented approach. This particular chapter also provides helpful definitions of terms: quotations (pp. 15–17); allusions (pp. 17–20); echoes (pp. 20–24) and parallels (pp. 24–27). Beetham also proposes methodologies for determining both allusions and echoes (p. 27).

For allusions he suggests the key elements of (1) availability; (2) word agreement or rare concept similarity; and (3) essential interpretation link. He also suggests other complementary criteria: (1) scholarly assessment; (2) OT and Jewish interpretive tradition; (3) other verified references from the same OT context in Colossians; (4) occurrence elsewhere in the Pauline corpus; and (5) thematic coherence (pp. 32–34).

In determining echoes Beetham refers back to the first set of criteria (as outlined above), used for determining allusions as a starting point. The next step seems to be subjective: he suggests that "there is an element of intuition and judgment in the detection and verification of an echo" (p. 35). A person who is steeped in the Hebrew Bible may more easily recognize echoes than a person who is not well-tuned to it.

The methods outlined above for determining and verifying allusions and echoes are applied by Beetham to eleven passages in Colossians (chapters 3–13). The author suggests six steps for determining the use of the identified echoes and allusions in Colossians in the light of their context and use in the OT (p. 36). These include (1) "exegesis of the Old Testament passage alluded to and echoed in both its broad and immediate context" (p. 36); (2) "comparison of the versions and analysis of Paul's textual use" (p. 38); (3) "investigation of the interpretive tradition of the Old Testament text" (p. 38); (4) "exegesis of the appropriate text in Colossians" (p. 38); (5) "examination of the other uses of the same OT text elsewhere in the NT as well as in the early Church Fathers" (p. 39); and (6) "analysis of Paul's hermeneutical use of the OT" (p. 39). The ultimate key question that this set of criteria promises to address is "what Paul has done with the Scriptures of Israel in his

letter to the church in Colossae?" (p. 40). Beetham's efforts in this volume to develop a method for determining and verifying allusions and echoes will meet the suspicion of those who believe that a precise definition of terms may not be achievable (cf. Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John* [WUNT II.158; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003]).

The 11 passages are neatly summarized in appendix one of this volume, with columns indicating the respective OT references, Colossians references, whether it is an echo or an allusion, indicators of shared language or concepts, and hermeneutical presuppositions (pp. 267–70). However, in this summary the author does not give the entire OT passage that is explored for the meaning of the allusion or echo. The themes he provides, i.e., "new creation", "Christ as Messianic son of David", "temple", "Exodus motif", "circumcision" and "idolatry" are not clearly explained. Neither is it indicated whether they refer to the OT, Colossians or both. The author seems to be aware of the dangers of parallelomania (pp. 5, 11).

In chapters 3–13, dealing with echoes and allusions, Beetham carefully examines both the OT and Colossian passages. It may be an interesting exercise to use the criteria that Beetham proposes to test the allusions and echoes that have been identified by other authors. This may be a good test for the method that he proposes. It is not clear to the reader whether all these texts have been tested and the 11 were selected as those that best passed the tests. He cites as his contribution, "to put forward and defend the 11 allusions and echoes detected by the methodology" (p. 8). The 11 allusions and echoes seem to be well defended by the proposed methodology.

Chapter fourteen enumerates the ramifications for this research. It is in this chapter that the author summarizes what he recognizes as the contribution of this volume.

(1) The detection of allusions and echoes itself contributes to the OT in NT research. The letter to the Colossians was almost abandoned in the search until this volume emerged to stimulate a discussion that has been started by some and viewed with suspicion by many.

(2) There is a contribution in the letter's Christology by identifying, for example, echoes of the Davidic lineage (2 Sam 7:12–18 echoed in Col 1:13b; Col 1:9 echoes Col 1:13b; Col 1:9 echoes Isa 11:1–9). Hendrikus Boers in his volume entitled *Christ in the Letters of Paul: In Place of a Christology* calls for a focus on Scripture rather than imposing external categories of Christology onto Scripture. His focus is on Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Thessalonians. Again Colossians and other letters are left out for lack of direct quotations on the subject (see the present author's review of Boers' work in

*Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 10 [2007]: 91–94). Beetham should be commended for opening a window to the depths into which the subject of Christology can be taken in Colossians.

(3) Beetham grabs the bull by the horns in his analysis of the long debated subject of the opponents in Colossians. His proposal calls for the abandonment of the widely-held position that there is syncretism to be perceived from the way the opponents are presented in the letter to the Colossians. However, he does not solve the problem of the juxtaposition of Jewish elements with elements that do not resonate with Judaism. Nor does he attempt to harmonize all these elements into Judaism. He seems to still perpetuate the same problem of putting everything in one category of opponents.

Jerry Sumney, in his earlier work, relates to the key residual problems that one finds in Beetham's approach regarding the opponents. He argues: "The most certain characteristics of the teachers Colossians opposes (e.g., mild asceticism and attaining visions) could be related to many religious and philosophical movements of the time. But no cluster of beliefs or practices is sufficient to affirm a definite connection with any of them" (Jerry L. Sumney, "Studying Paul's Opponents: Advances and Challenges," in *Paul and His Opponents* [ed. Stanley E. Porter; Pauline Studies 3; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 58). I have suggested elsewhere that a careful analysis of the literary structure of Colossians may contribute towards a better understanding of the opponents in Colossians. This view develops a possibility in the same direction with Sumney's proposal. Although the view has been suggested by a few scholars, there has been a lack of support from the text itself (see Mxolisi M. Sokupa "Holy Persons and Holiness in Colossians," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 11 [2008]: 145–58).

(4) Another contribution is made that seems to fit well in the category of NT theology. Beetham relates some of the echoes and allusions to the promise-fulfillment scheme. Five out of the 11 references have this prophetic or typological fulfillment. In his discussion the author marginalizes Col 2:16, 17 which has been acknowledged even by one of the standard lexicons (*BAGD*) as typological. In this volume it is relegated into the concluding chapter and appendix section with little acknowledgment of its import on the subject. At the least this passage should have featured among the 11 identified echoes and allusions of the OT in this letter. Proper attention given to this passage will also bring to light other relationships with Galatians and Hebrews where only Ephesians has been recognized. There is a need to acknowledge and adequately interpret the typological scheme in this neglected passage as well, an issue I am currently addressing in my Ph.D. dissertation. The discovery of OT echoes and allusions that surface in

other Pauline letters leads the argument against Pauline authorship to its place of final rest.

This book is a must read for all Pauline scholars and students. It maps a new path for a direction of investigation that has been neglected in Colossian studies for a long time. The rigorous approach in the development of methodology for the study of allusions and echoes is highly commendable and may serve as a firm foundation for such studies within and beyond Pauline studies.

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*Christianity among the Religions of the World*, by Carlos G. Martin. Lanham: University Press of America, 2007. Pp. xiv + 439. ISBN 978-0-7618-3793-0. Paperback. \$55.00.

Carlos G. Martin is currently director of the Institute of Missions and Evangelism at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee. He obtained a Ph.D. in Missions and Evangelism from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. His eight years of teaching and missionary work in Asia provided him with an opportunity to meet people of most religions and he has done additional seminars in Europe, Africa, Australia and all three Americas. He is also author of *The Science of Soul Winning and Turning the World Upside Down*.

According to the preface, this work grew out of Martin's own class and lecture notes which he developed over the years. It is meant to serve as an introduction to World Religions and was designed as a textbook for Christian colleges, seminaries and universities. It is written from an Interdenominational Protestant/Evangelical perspective and is meant not only to inform the student about the religions of the world but also to inspire them for mission work (pp. xiii-xiv).

The textbook was designed in the form of a very clear outline in order for teachers and students to have easy access to the plethora of information contained in the book, (somewhat akin to Wikipedia). Each of the chapters not only focuses on giving a very helpful historical overview of the religion and its theology, but also includes suggestions for Christian witness to that particular group. There are excellent diagrams, tables and figures throughout the book which aid in the understanding of complex subjects. The book is very well researched, with an excellent endnote section of both print and web resources to provide pathways for further exploration of the subject matter.