

BOOK REVIEWS

Donald K. Berry. *An Introduction to Wisdom and Poetry of the Old Testament*. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1995. xvi + 463 pp. \$24.99 (cloth).
Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Author Donald K. Berry is Assistant Professor of Religion at the University of Mobile, Alabama. He received his Ph.D. at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has done additional studies in comparative literature at Indiana University. He also wrote *The Psalms and Their Readers: Interpretative Strategies for Psalm 18* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993). Dr. Berry has also pastored churches in Kentucky and Alabama.

This volume has the format of a textbook for colleges and seminaries, with chapters carefully organized. Questions for discussion come at the conclusion of each chapter. In addition, it includes 27 tables of detailed studies spread throughout the text. These studies cover the types of poetic units in the Hebrew Bible (210-14), poetic units in Sirach (348), speakers in the Song of Songs (385), garden images in the Song of Songs (406), and many more. The tables convey a wealth of material in short compass, enabling the author to point the reader to more detailed studies without departing from the introductory nature of the volume. In addition to recognizing the sources for citations, the footnotes provide definitions, additional comments regarding more detailed studies, and bibliographic references to additional resources.

End materials include a glossary of selected terms (423-29). Some terms defined within the text are not in the glossary, but can be located through the subject index (e.g., acrostic, envelope structure, meter, parallelism, and wasf). However, some terms escape definition anywhere (e.g., chiasmus, ellipsis, apocryphon, proem, and taunt song). The work gives four separate, select bibliographies for Wisdom, Poetry, History of Interpretation, and Ancient Near Eastern Literature (431-40). It has indexes for names, subjects, and Scripture. The subject index is impressive because of its amount of detail.

Subject matter is broader than just Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Lamentations, and the Song of Songs. It also discusses Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature, the deuterocanonical books, the pseudepigrapha, early Jewish literature, and materials in the nonpoetic and non-wisdom biblical corpus. It traces the history of interpretation from the ANE setting to modern times, including the

patristic period, the medieval period, and the Reformation. Section titles in the text highlight contributions to the study of biblical wisdom literature and biblical poetry by Crenshaw, Delitzsch, Donne, Driver, Eissfeldt, Ewald, Gerstenberger, Herder, Hobbes, Mead, Rinkart, Rylaarsdam, Spinoza, von Rad, Whybray, and Wolff. Specialized studies that advanced the respective fields also receive attention, but without separate section titles referring to the individuals. These include studies by Berlin, Camp, Collins, Cross, Duhm, Gevirtz, Sievers, Gunkel, Hrushovski, Köhler, Kugel, Lowth, McKane, Mowinckel, O'Connor, Schökel, Watson, and others.

Berry carefully lays out his approach to the study of wisdom in Part One of the volume (1):

- Which books do we include in the scope of wisdom?
- What interests do the books of wisdom share with wisdom materials from other ancient civilizations?
- How did the wisdom sayings fit within the community of worship in ancient Israel?
- How were the books understood and interpreted in subsequent history?
- What are the unique and common features of each of the wisdom books?
- How does the combination of the books' unique features expand the general concept of wisdom?

In this reviewer's opinion, the author does an excellent job of accomplishing exactly what he set out to do. Unfortunately, he does not introduce Part Two of the volume by a similar plan (173). However, he does arrange the material of the second part in much the same way as that of the first part.

The author's view of Ecclesiastes is too negative. It places too much stress on skepticism. Michael A. Eaton and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., have sounder interpretations of Ecclesiastes. The author refers to neither of these commentaries in his presentation of the history of interpretation.

In the brief definitions of the Hebrew vocabulary of wisdom, the only resource cited is BDB (once, 23). The author himself admits to oversimplification in the discussion of the Hebrew terms (5 n. 5). He could improve the discussions by providing some guidance for the student desiring more information.

Sometimes the author makes statements without explanation that leave the reader wondering what he intended. He implies that giving thanks to God has some sort of controlling effect upon God's actions (189). In yet another instance, he seems to indicate that God Himself receives blessing by His association with Zion (191). His exegesis of Psalm 49:14-15 misses the mark when he says that "the psalmist is confident personal integrity brings deliverance" (372), implying a works form of salvation. Some statements are inaccurate, as in the comment that 2 Samuel 22 contains a "hymn identical to Psalm 18" (197). Psalm 18 has many differences that can be accounted for by the different functions served by the two versions of the hymn.

The author's neglect of conservative scholars shows up in their omission

from his references in text, footnotes, and bibliographies. He makes only passing references to the Job commentaries by Robert Alden and F. I. Andersen. Conservative commentaries and studies are pretty much ignored. The lone exception is *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Literary Forms* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995) by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., to which Berry refers four times. One of the disappointments is the lack of any reference to John H. Sailhamer's presentation of narrative/poetic seams in the Pentateuch.

In the treatment of poetry in the Pentateuch, the volume has overlooked Leviticus 26 in spite of the fact that its poetic content was long ago identified by Karl Elliger. The covenant curse text has many similarities to Deuteronomy 28, which Berry and many others identify as poetic. Leviticus employs chiasmus, proverbial numbers, inclusio, repetition, assonance, and even parallelism (see esp. v. 42). The author probably ignored it because of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia's* prose formatting of the entire chapter. The chapter could at least have received as much attention as Berry gave to "measured prose" or "narrative poetry" in 1 Samuel 17:42-47 (313).

Berry repeatedly refers to Daniel's poetry as "Hebrew poetry," even when it is in Aramaic (204-5, 343-45). This oversimplification needs further exploration, especially with regard to the poem of Nebuchadnezzar.

The author's redactional stance on the date and authorship of books of the OT becomes clearer as the reader progresses through this volume. He questions that Solomon produced any finished work such as Ecclesiastes (25). He proposes the righteous sufferer of Ugarit as "the basis of the prose framework of Job" (33). Berry implies that there is even a difference in the view of Yahweh's inspiration of scriptural wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 as compared to chapters 10-31 (37). He also claims that "the model for royal wisdom could have been adapted from the Assyrians or Babylonians and applied to Solomon retroactively" (38). He dismisses a patriarchal date for the book of Job as an early Jewish attempt to associate the book with the Pentateuch (51)—even though he later admits that "Job may come from originals dating to the patriarchal period" (95). His identification of Job as a postexilic production is based upon "its philosophical debate style" (95).

He even dismisses the NT's citation of Proverbs 8 as a reference to a person of the Godhead as being influenced by Greek hypostatic thought (46-47, 62-63). Berry does not consider that the personification of wisdom as a person of the Godhead may have arisen in the deuterocanon and the NT as a result of Proverbs 8 *per se*. Some of his illustrations of Jesus' dependence on Sirach and Paul's employment of the Wisdom of Solomon are tenuous, at best. Similarity of thought or of illustration does not prove a common source. This would be especially true within the same cultural setting. Writers within the same culture may be expected to utilize some amount of similar phraseology, observations, and illustrations independent of one another. Berry himself admits that "the mere presence of wisdom

terminology serves as poor support for the claim of dependence. The scholar needs to be sensitive to the shades of distinction between supposition and proof" (90).

The author's reluctance to date any biblical poetry prior to 1300 B.C. (209), indicates the degree of redactionism he accepts. He would evidently follow either a late dating for Moses or deny Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch since Genesis 4, Genesis 49, and Exodus 15 contain examples of poetry that the conservative scholar would date no later than 1400 B.C. for Moses' editing. These compositions existed prior to Moses recording them. The oral forms of the Genesis poems predate Moses by centuries.

In spite of his redactional viewpoint and the various shortcomings identified by this review, Berry has produced a very readable and informative volume. It has a wealth of information in its pages. Berry's ready wit and awareness of his own times contribute to the volume's readability. At one point he wryly observes that a certain Babylonian document mentioned incantations, "especially their lack of effect" (34). In his discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux's allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs, he observes that Bernard's "interpretations show amazing agility" (258). One of the many pieces of information included by the author is the account of Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563) being denied ordination in Geneva because of his literal interpretation of the Song of Songs (270). The author also employs contemporary rap music to describe the lively performance involved in biblical poetry (292 n. 133).

The histories of interpretation and the book by book analyses are worth enduring the frustrations of its shortcomings. The professor teaching courses in either OT wisdom literature or poetry will appreciate this volume's sound pedagogical approach to the materials.

Mal Couch, gen. ed. *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996. 442 pp. \$22.99 (cloth). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Fifty-five scholars contribute more than 280 alphabetical entries. Couch is founder and president of Tyndale Theological Seminary and Biblical Institute in Fort Worth, Texas. The dictionary attempts to show major tenets of premillennial belief, more particularly dispensationalism. Seminary administrators, seminary faculty, pastors, and other speakers and writers articulate much about leading figures in premillennialism, key concepts, crucial Bible chapters, main views of certain systems that disagree, etc. The format of 2 columns has very readable print, with bold-faced subject headings. An index appears at the end (437-42).

Subjects range from the Abrahamic Covenant (6 pp.) and Acts 2 and Pentecost (1 page), to Zechariah, Eschatology of (7 1/2), and Zephaniah (2). The

New Covenant receives 5 pp. The work sketches many key leaders in premillennial teaching, such as David Baron, James Brookes, L. S. Chafer, Arno Gaebelein, James Gray, H. A. Ironside, Samuel Kellogg, J. D. Pentecost, George N. H. Peters, C. C. Ryrie, C. I. Scofield, John F. Walvoord, and Nathaniel West. The work also devotes entries to certain key writers for other views related to the debate, such as Augustine for the amillennial perspective.

Robert L. Thomas, Professor of New Testament, The Master's Seminary, contributes articles, for example, "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" and "Progressive Dispensationalism."

One feature is a sketch of the eschatology in every book of the Bible; another is articles on certain facets of hermeneutics. Key Bible books are Genesis, Daniel, Isaiah, Gospels, Romans, Hebrews, and Revelation. The entries on the Psalms include such key psalms as 2, 8, 16, 22, 89 and 110. On the book of Revelation, the study delves into topics like the Two Witnesses, Dating the Book around A.D. 95, the False Prophet, Interpretive Views of the Book, Structure, 24 Elders, etc. "Rapture" draws about 28 pp., including various views of the same (Partial, Pre-tribulational, Pre-wrath, and Post-tribulational). "Reconstruction" theology receives 3 pp.

The *Dictionary* tries to correct a common misrepresentation of dispensationalism as teaching opposing ways of salvation in different ages, saying that the system teaches salvation to be by grace through faith in every age (388).

On Daniel's Seventy Weeks, features deal helpfully with amillennial interpretation, dispensational logic, and rabbinic thought. Throughout the dictionary, entries conclude with a bibliography listing further readings. These offer some of the best books, journal literature, doctoral studies, and the like.

Key texts and their issues naturally invest much reasoning for a premillennial-dispensational view—e.g., Genesis 12 and 15; Psalm 89; Isaiah 11; Daniel 2, 7, 9; Zechariah 1–6 and 14; Matthew 13 and 24–25; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 4–5 (elders), 6–9 (judgments), 11 (two witnesses), 17 (Babylon), 19 (Bride). In Genesis 12–15, six reasons argue for the unconditional nature of the covenant God made with Abraham (30).

One can be a firm premillennial dispensationalist and yet differ from several interpretations favored on passages here. For example, in contrast to seeing no fulfillment of Joel 2 in Acts 2, he can see at least a partial fulfillment of certain details in Joel 2:28 ff.; he can say that the 24 elders in the Revelation are celestial beings, not humans; he can reason that the Treasure and Pearl (Matthew 13) do not distinguish Israel (Treasure) and the Church (Pearl), yet both emphasize the value of believers to God; he can view as finally artificial the dictionary's view that Revelation 2–3 (the seven church sections) develop blocks of particular years spanning church history, and can think contrived a supposed similarity of Matthew 13 with Revelation 2–3, viewed as giving blocks of history (at least p. 313 acknowledges that "not all dispensationalists hold to this view").

One interesting section, on H. A. Ironside, offers several arguments defending against the theory that Ironside in later years gave up loyalty to his premillennial dispensational conviction.

In the midst of much that offers valuable benefit, the dictionary does have some drawbacks. One is the lack of a scriptural index that would help in locating certain discussions. Another is that some statements are more speculative opinion than necessary even to a premillennial view (an example is a list of claimed "types" of the Antichrist, even the serpent in Eden, Amalek, Balaam, and Sennacherib, 43-44). A still further one is the problem of careless proofreading at times, permitting needless errors. And the value of articles differs greatly, some done with apparently great carefulness that offers much help, others generalized as if written "off the cuff" to meet a deadline.

All in all, though, the work will be a welcome tool for teachers, church staff, and students seeking handy reference. Those of a premillennial persuasion or other viewpoints on matters of the prophetic word can find value here, varying between the entries.

Thomas R. Edgar. *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996. 283 pp. \$12.99 (cloth). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Ten chapters attempt to answer recent charismatic arguments, especially as articulated by Jack S. Deere (*Surprised By the Power of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). Readers will also find a response to Deere's book in Richard Mayhue, "Who Surprised Whom? The Holy Spirit or Jack Deere?" *The Master's Seminary Journal* 5/2 (Fall, 1994):123-40. Edgar is Professor of New Testament, Capital Bible Seminary, Lanham, Maryland. He writes from the standpoint of the cessationist view of certain New Testament gifts of the Spirit, such as tongues, healings, and signs and wonders.

His book deals with the issue of whether all the miracle gifts of the NT era are fully operative today, as claimed by many writers in Pentecostal, charismatic, and signs and wonders groups. Deere, whose work Edgar is chiefly addressing, was on the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary before he left the doctrinal position there and subscribed to his present views about the gifts.

The reasoning of Edgar is that NT passages, which he discusses sometimes in considerable detail, show God's intent for some gifts to be permanent and others temporary, in the early church only. He also takes up a number of accusations from Deere and others to the effect that those not practicing miraculous gifts now are living sub-par spiritual lives. His quest in a nutshell is to show that Christians can be satisfied and fulfilled by the Spirit in a God-pleasing, fruitful life sufficient

through Scripture apart from these particular gifts.

To accomplish his objectives, Edgar devotes his main chapters to the priority of what the Scripture says over claimed experiences (Chap. 1), biblical information on the gifts (Chap. 3), the temporary nature of NT apostles and prophets (Chap. 4), miracles and healing (Chap. 5), the nature and purpose of tongues (Chap. 6-7), the temporary purpose of certain gifts in the early church era (Chap. 9), and a conclusion (Chap. 10). The last chapter, among other things, points out Deere accusations of cessationist unspirituality and Deere misrepresentations of statements Edgar made in an earlier book, *Miraculous Gifts*.

In Chap. 1, Edgar says it is legitimate for a Christian to want more power and passion for God (11), but believers should draw on the supply according to proper interpretation of God's Word. This will be sufficient without overt, visible evidence of God's presence in experiencing miraculous gifts, or in a health and wealth gospel, exorcisms, etc. The focus is wrong, he believes, when one puts emphasis on miraculous experiences for their own sake. It also is askew when claiming that Christians are unbelieving or without spiritual power if they do not feel that Scripture validates present seeking of these.

Edgar is convinced that Deere wrongly conveys the impression that religious experience ("It happened to me") itself validates his case. Such a focus on experience is a frequent assertion by Deere, rather than consistently acknowledging that Scripture has persuaded him. Edgar claims that Deere did not demonstrate in the book above that he had carefully studied all the crucial passages in the discussion yet (19).

In dealing with Scripture, Chap. 2 asserts that "scriptural argument will seldom convince charismatics that their interpretation of the experience is wrong" (23). The chapter insists that the only proper standard by which to evaluate experience is Scripture. He mentions Deere's admission that he originally chose a cessationist system so that it would permit him an excuse for not having a passion for God (25). This, Edgar contends, is a misrepresentation of motives in the many cessationists who have had a passion for the Lord, have led many to the Savior, and have shown sacrificial love to Him and His people, sometimes even sealing their testimony in martyrdom for Christ's sake.

Besides, says Edgar, many have switched from a charismatic view to a cessationist position. They would argue their experience if experience is to be decisive. Again, what God's Word says and means is the objective guide (26). He claims it is a fallacy of Deere to reason that people are not cessationists because of what Scripture teaches but because they have not experienced the gifts (28).

Chapter 2 also argues for a difference between NT miraculous gifts and those claimed today. One distinction is that Jesus and the apostles never failed, as advocates of miracles do today. Many charismatics admit that alleged gifts today are different from NT gifts, saying that people now do not have the gift of *infallible* prophecy as in the early church, thus conceding what cessationists basically argue.

Other charismatics have shifted to an effort to establish that their lesser, fallible prophecies are also in Scripture, in NT prophets as distinguished from OT prophets.

A notable advocate is Wayne Grudem (*The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* [Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988] 109-12). In a 4-part series, David Farnell has answered Grudem and others (“Does the New Testament Teach Two Prophetic Gifts?”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149/596, 150/597, 150/598, 150/599 [1992-1993]). Edgar’s survey of various passages admits no case of the NT, rightly interpreted, giving a lesser, defective type of gift matching those alleged today.

The writer being reviewed here uses Chap. 4 to argue for the temporary (early church) duration of apostles and prophets. He uses Eph 2:20 as a key text to claim this (cf. 72-85).

A case develops in Chap. 5 against the presence today of any who have the NT sign gifts such as miracles and healing. God does heal in answer to prayer, Edgar writes, but this does not mean that individuals with sign gifts are present. Even James 5:14-15 directed the church to deal with sickness as noncharismatic churches do today; evidently healers and miracle workers were not available. Chapter 6, a very long one (120-64), reasons that NT tongues were human languages as in Acts 2:4-11. In 10:46 Peter testifies that tongues at Caesarea were the same as in 2:4-11. Edgar sees no evidence in Scripture of *gl_ssa* ever meaning ecstatic speech (153). Verses in 1 Corinthians speak of foreign languages: 12:2 refers to tongues that are intelligible; 13:1 to tongues of men; 14:22 is a deduction based on Isaiah 28:11 that speaks of invaders’ foreign language. The author answers alleged problems for a human language view in 1 Corinthians 12–14 in ways fitting earthly languages. Glossalalia (ecstatic speech), common in various parts of the world, are non-supernatural and can be self-induced, in contrast to NT tongues that are miraculous from God (154-55).

Edgar sees the purpose of tongues as a sign to unbelievers, not only Jews but Gentiles relevant at Corinth (1 Cor 14:22). Supernatural tongues gained a hearing for the gospel. Their purpose was not to transmit angelic tongues or enhance personal devotions, for they always were for ministry to *others*. Romans 8:26 precludes the need for devotional help in this way since the Holy Spirit helps all believers in prayer without tongues. In addition, tongues are not evidence for a post-conversion baptism of the Spirit. Edgar develops at length his arguments against a private, devotional use (166-81).

The conclusion (10) shows that Deere’s approach has been endorsed by well-known charismatics. Deere pled for fairness, yet Edgar documents many citations where Deere attacks cessationists—their motives, honesty, humility, warmth, spiritual wholeness, confidence in God’s ability, living by grace, love, and morality (251). Another point here concerns many definite misrepresentations Deere makes of Edgar’s statements in *Miraculous Gifts*. Edgar asks how charismatic leaders can fail to recognize the weakness and improbability of Deere’s allegations, also his biblical interpretation, and can laud Deere’s book highly (253-55).

A 9-page bibliography and indexes of Scripture and subjects finish the book.

Edgar's book is a clear, detailed, closely-reasoned one obviously arising from diligent probing of Bible passages and currents of thought in the cessationist and charismatic views. For one who has read the volume by Deere, this response offers a provocative appeal not to be surprised by the Spirit but satisfied, based on allowing Scripture to be the basis, and assessing experiential claims by it.

John S. Feinberg. *Deceived by God?* Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1997. 141 pp. \$9.99 (paper). Reviewed by Larry D. Pettegrew, Professor of Theology.

Most of us will need this little book sometime in our lives—either for ourselves, or for others. John Feinberg, Professor of Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has written a book which he “never wanted to write” (9). In 1987, Feinberg's wife, Patricia, was diagnosed with Huntington's Disease, a genetically transmitted illness that attacks part of the brain, causing gradual loss of control of one's voluntary movements, plus memory loss and depression. Dr. Feinberg was devastated, especially since before he proposed marriage to Patricia years earlier, he had been assured by doctors and seemingly God, that something like this would not happen. It was almost as though he had been deceived by God.

Feinberg has really wrestled with his situation—and clearly is still wrestling with it. But he has made great progress, and he shares the lessons he has learned. He relates his feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (Chap. 2). He offers advice on “how **not** to help the afflicted” (Chap. 3). He explains how he has been able to continue to appreciate the goodness of God (Chap. 4); why God hides the future from us (Chap. 5); the seeming unfairness of God (Chap. 6); how to use our afflictions for good (Chap. 7); and how suffering can produce holiness (Chap. 8). The book also includes an “Afterword” by Patricia, wherein she graciously and firmly expresses her abiding confidence in her Lord.

The underlying reason that this book is so valuable is that John Feinberg is an excellent theologian and student of Scripture. More specifically, he has specialized in the study of evil during his academic career. His doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago and some of his previous books deal with theodicy, the problem of evil. Of course, as he himself admits, his personal struggle with his wife's suffering is fundamentally an emotional problem rather than an intellectual one. Still, his many practical suggestions are undergirded with theological and biblical insights.

This book will be useful for laypeople, pastors, and biblical counselors. I recommend it.

Everet Ferguson, ed.. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. 2nd Edition. New York: Garland, 1997. 2 volumes. 1213 pp. \$75.95 (cloth). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

With the recent resurgence of interest in the early church and church Fathers (as evidenced by the upcoming release of a 22-volume anthological commentary on the Scriptures, based on the writings of the church Fathers and edited by Thomas Oden [InterVarsity], due March 1998), a revision of this classic reference work is a welcome addition.

The editor, Distinguished Professor at Abilene Christian University and author of *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Eerdmans 1987, 1993, reviewed in *TMSJ* 5/2, 216-17), oversaw the revision that included over 250 new entries and a significant updating of the more than 1,000 others. The major purpose of the expansion of articles was to give "greater attention to the eastward expansion of Christianity" (viii). The two volumes are of the highest quality in both binding and paper, with a two-column per page layout. Though not profuse, the photographs, maps, and drawings to illustrate various articles are adequate. Every entry supplies a bibliography ranging from a single citation to over 25. A time-line at the beginning of Volume One covers the major events and personalities from the birth of Christ (ca. 4 B.C.) through roughly the Second Council of Nicea (A.D. 769). Additionally, the volume has an excellent 24-page subject index. The index lists all references to a particular subject, with page numbers representing the main entry given in bold type.

The strength of the work is in the clear and concise writing of the articles that vary in length from a single paragraph to several pages. Those who are not well-versed in the background and beliefs of the Orthodox Church will welcome the greater emphasis given to the eastern church in this edition. Many noteworthy articles deal with topics such as the "Interpretation of the Bible" and "Preaching." In addition, the articles on the various personalities and issues in the early doctrinal and Christological controversies are very thorough. The articles all serve the purpose of providing a basic overview and introduction, with a bibliography directing to sources for more specialized study.

While the price will be a hindrance to those of limited means, this is a valuable resource that will certainly be a standard reference source for years to come. I highly recommend this work and, for those unable to afford it personally, would advise them to recommend its purchase by their local public or university library.

S. Gerstenberger. *Leviticus: A Commentary*. Translated by Douglas W. Stott. OTL.

Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1996. xiv + 450 pp. \$42.00 (cloth).
Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Gerstenberger is Professor of Old Testament at Philipps-Universität, Marburg, Germany. He has written a number of books including *Yahweh the Patriarch: Ancient Images of God and Feminist Theology* (Fortress, 1996). *Leviticus* replaces the volume by Martin Noth (Westminster, 1965) in *The Old Testament Library* commentaries.

This volume contains a select bibliography at the beginning (xi-xiv) and a cursory subject index at the end (448-50). The translation of *Leviticus* follows the NRSV when there is essential agreement with Gerstenberger's own German translation of the Hebrew text. The main purpose of the commentary is to provide a translation and a discussion of the "sociotheological significance" of the text (19). Gerstenberger then applies the teachings of *Leviticus* to contemporary questions regarding the worship of God within a community of faith.

At times the translator of Gerstenberger's German text utilizes unusual collocations such as "hand leaning" for "laying on of hands" or "hand placement" (26), "blood aspersion" for "sprinkling blood" (27), and "stepwise burning" for "step by step burning" or "progressive burning" (30).

The author assumes a date for the composition of *Leviticus* in the Persian period between the fifth and third centuries B.C. There is no room for Mosaic authorship in his presentation. Indeed, he associates himself with a traditio-historical viewpoint that proposes an accretion of the parts of *Leviticus* like rings in a tree. "If a text grows like a tree in annual rings, then one can free oneself from the notion of an ordered, continuing narrative and focus on the thematically centered growth of individual textual groups" (6). Such presuppositions create their own set of interpretative problems. The author later admits that "theory and practice do not seem quite to coincide in the third book of Moses. The requirement of presenting an offering at the entrance to the tent of meeting, that is, at the one holy site and through the mediation of the one Aaronid priesthood, disregards the dispersal of the postexilic communities" (35). With this viewpoint the author must also devise an explanation for the constant references to Moses and Aaron as the recipients of divine revelation. Such problems are almost nonexistent if one accepts Mosaic authorship and an early setting for the book.

In 2:2 the NRSV has "token portion" (cf. "memorial portion" in NASB). Gerstenberger translates and annotates as follows: "sacrificial portion [literally 'memorial offering']" (37). He goes on to explain that it most likely involves encomiastic confession or invocation (42). His discussion surpasses the less than convincing explanation previously given by Noth.

"Semolina" in Gerstenberger's translation of 2:1 is another departure from NRSV ("choice flour"). The translation represents something quite different from the traditional definition of a finely ground wheat flour. "Semolina," according to

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, is “the gritty, coarse particles of wheat left after the finer flour has passed through the bolting machine, used for pasta.”

Gerstenberger correctly describes the exegetical significance of the use of the second person direct address in Leviticus (cf. 1:2, “When any of you . . .”). He argues that the present title of the book was based upon a misunderstanding of the contents, originating in the Greek and Latin traditions. The text is not a manual for Levites, but an instruction manual for the congregation of Israel (1, 43). However, the author also utilizes the direct address in support of his traditio-historical argument for composition in the Persian period and editorial projection of the materials back into the Mosaic period (25).

In contrast to the consistent format of Noth’s volume, Gerstenberger’s inconsistency in format is frustrating. Some sections (e.g., Chap. 1) are granted an interpretative “Analysis” (24) while other sections have none (Chaps. 2–3). Other sections receive more detailed attention under the headings of “Structure and Content” (65) and “Details” (93). “Structure and Analysis” (160) for Chap. 13 does not follow the format of previous sections containing these elements in their headings. The treatment of Chap. 17 (235-40) bears none of the previous headings but follows the same format as Chap. 1’s analysis. Several sections have verse-reference outlines and present the reader with what approximates a verse-by-verse commentary (e.g., 251-54 on 18:18-23, 315-16 on 21:8, 12, and 374-92 on 25:2-55). Since this commentary is arranged mainly by topics, the reader in search of verse-by-verse comment will often not find it.

Various interpretative discussions throughout the commentary are significantly more detailed than in Noth’s volume. For example, Gerstenberger discusses the presence of invocations or hymns at the time of sacrifice (31). In the handling of the important 26th chapter, the present volume has 34 pages of material as compared to Noth’s 6 pages. The author takes the time and space to discuss such things as the paronomasia involved in the word for “idols” (26:1; 403), the relationship to prophetic texts like Amos 4:6-11 (413), and the significance of “sevenfold” (26:18, 21, 24, 27; 413-14). Although Gerstenberger does not discuss whether Chap. 26 contains poetry, he does state that “the main melody is thus stated, and is then picked up and varied in the subsections” (412). He also mentions the use of poetic terminology. Ultimately, he classifies Chap. 26 as a comminatory sermon (423-26).

One of the outstanding characteristics of this commentary is the multitude of investigative questions that it asks. An interpreter must first know what questions to ask of the text before he can provide answers. Gerstenberger employs questions to guide the reader in a reasoned contemplation of the source for the text, the wording of the text, its purpose, and its application. For example, in his treatment of Chap. 13, the author poses 37 interpretative questions (156-73). The evangelical scholar may not agree with all the answers the author offers, but he certainly must

give due consideration to the questions.

Anyone involved in a detailed study of Leviticus will do well to include this volume in his library. In spite of his redactional and traditio-historical perspective, Gerstenberger has made a significant contribution to the interpretation of Leviticus.

Grant R. Jeffrey. *The Signature of God: Astonishing Biblical Discoveries*. Toronto: Frontier Research, 1996. 278 pp. \$13.95 (paper). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Grant Jeffrey has authored a number of volumes on biblical studies. Most of those books have been published by Frontier Research Publications of Toronto.

The majority deal with the prophetic materials of Scripture. Both Hal Lindsey and Jack Van Impe have recommended Jeffrey's publications. *The Signature of God* went through five printings in its first six months (July-December 1996) due to its popularity. Its claims are similar to those contained in a recent national best seller: Michale Drosnin, *The Bible Code* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). Ronald S. Hendel and Shlomo Steinberg have written an excellent response to *The Bible Code* in their article "The Bible Code: Cracked and Crumbling," *Bible Review* 13 (August 1997):22-25.

The profile, popularity, and claims of *The Signature of God* demand its review in this journal. It is not the practice of *The Master's Seminary Journal* to multiply negative reviews, but some volumes cannot be ignored because of their popularity, even though their content is debatable. A warning sometimes needs to be given concerning such works. This will be that kind of review.

The thesis of Jeffrey's work is "that the Bible contains a number of fascinating proofs that absolutely authenticate the Scriptures as the inspired and authoritative Word of God" (9). The evidences marshaled include that of historical documents, archeology, science, medicine, fulfillment of prophecy, coded words and phrases hidden in the Hebrew text, mathematical characteristics hidden in the Hebrew text, and "undesigned coincidences."

Jeffrey's intentions are good and his format is fascinating. However, his treatment of the material is not always sound. To begin with, he engages in a cavalier and unsubstantiated use of numbers. For example, he claims that within 40-50 years of NT events "millions of Gentile and Jewish believers" existed (29) and that during the 2nd and 3rd centuries "millions of these converts died horribly as martyrs" (30). He cites statistics for the use of "heart" in the OT in a context dealing with the physical organ, but he gives no indication that most of the references do not refer to the organ (155). In addition, Jeffrey cites statistical probabilities for the fulfillment of various OT prophecies without proof of the accuracy of the probabilities—in fact, many are admittedly estimates (172-81).

Another characteristic of Jeffrey's approach is his utilization of impressive numbers without supporting documentation. Examples include the percentages of early American colleges which were Christian and of the classes of those schools in 1855 who became ministers of the gospel (20), the number of recovered manuscripts and letters from the first few centuries which were written by Christians (22), and the claim that 98% of the content of the NT is found in those materials (22). Other undocumented and questionable statistics include the claim that there are more than 85,000 converts to Christianity every day worldwide (31-32) and that more than 100 million true Christians live in China today (197).

Some of Jeffrey's claims are definitely erroneous. In regard to codes and mathematical characteristics, he dogmatically asserts that "while these incredible patterns exist in the Hebrew text of the Torah, no other apocryphal texts display this pattern, nor can they find it in any other Hebrew religious or secular texts" (11). However, Muslim scholars make exactly the same kind of claims for the Quran. During this reviewer's fifteen years of missionary service in a Muslim country, he learned that Muslim scholars cite numerical "codes" in the Quran as proof that it is a God-given book. The number "nineteen," for example, occurs in a large number of varied situations in the Quran, a feature that cannot be attributed to mere coincidence. The statistics for this Quranic number include chapters, verses, words, letters, and sequences. Consider the following quotes from Muhammad Zamir, *Dreams, Miracles and Supplications in Islam* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: The University Press Ltd., 1995), 25-26 (emphasis added):

The mystery continues. 'Basmalah' (in Arabic) or 'Besmele' (in Turkish) or 'Bismillah' (in the languages of the Indian Sub-continent) all refer to 'Bismillah ar Rahman ar Rahim' (In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful). Almost all the chapters of the Holy Quran start with this sentence (except the ninth Sura Tauba), and this consists of 19 letters. It is also interesting to note that the first word "Ism" meaning "Name" occurs 19 times in the Quran. It is also extraordinary that the word Allah occurs 2698 times in the Quran—which again is divisible by 19 ($19 \times 142 = 2698$). This incredible series of coincidences continues. 'Al Rahman' (the Most Gracious) occurs 57 times (divisible by 19) and 'Al Rahim' (the Most Merciful) occurs 114 times (again divisible by 19). *These are unmistakable signs of divine authorship.*

Any discussion of the mathematical aspects in the Quran would remain incomplete without reference to the *Code* letters or 'Muqatta-aat' as they appear at the heading of certain Chapters (Suras) in the Quran. It has been pointed out by Deedat that out of a total of 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, exactly half of them are involved in these Quranic initials (Alif, Lam, Mim, Re, Kaf, Small Hey, Ya, Ain, Swad, Toeh, Seen, Qaf, Nun, Big Hey). These 14 letters are constituted into 14 different combinations These 14 different combinations are repeated in 29 different Chapters of the Quran. If one adds the 14 initials to the 14 Combinations and the 29 Suras, one obtains a total of 57 (a multiple of 19). Another coincidence?

The miraculous nature of the Holy Quran and the great importance of 19 throughout the Holy Book has been also dealt with by other Islamic theologians. In this

context they refer to Sura Qaf, Sura Sad and Sura As-Shura and point out the the divine strain of 19 continues in the use of the Heys, the Mims, the Ains, the Seens and the Qafs in these Suras.

One would indeed be a fool if one did not understand from these *divine marks* the underlying indication of Allah. *No human author could have possibly written such a Book with its complicated dovetailing method and its numerical factors.*

This kind of argumentation is not a new discovery by Christian writers like Grant Jeffrey. If such arguments and demonstrations are proofs of divine inspiration, then the Quran also qualifies. In fact, his claims of certain sequences can be applied to the King James Version to show that its translation was a product of divine inspiration. Consider the following example: in the KJV Psalm 46's 46th word from the beginning is "shake" and the 46th word from the end is "spear." William Shakespeare was born in 1564 and was 46 years old in 1610. Therefore, on the basis of Jeffrey's reasoning, the Hebrew OT, the KJV (at least the latest revision of the original 1611 version), and the Quran all bear the divine imprimatur.

Other erroneous claims to be found in *The Signature of God* include: "The New Testament was widely copied and translated into many other languages during the first few decades following the resurrection of Christ" (30); "the original Greek manuscript of the New Testament was translated faithfully into Hebrew, Syriac, Egyptian, Coptic, Latin, and other languages between A.D. 60-70" (31); "the Torah, or the Law, recorded by Moses approximately 1491-1451 B.C." (139); and, "the Bible has now been translated in more than 3,850 languages in every nation" (196). All of these statements are demonstrably false.

Jeffrey avoids recent archeological research and evaluations (even by staunch evangelicals) for the Sinai inscriptions, the tower of Babel, and the walls of Jericho. Much of the support for his very questionable interpretations of these archaeological materials comes from nineteenth-century sources.

As if this were not enough to dissuade the thinking person from getting caught up in Jeffrey's claims, the actual evidence he presents in equidistant letter sequences is also flawed dramatically. In order to find "Hitler" in Deut 10:17-22, he had to omit one letter in accordance with a rabbinical abbreviation. In order to obtain "*be-yam marah Auschwitz*" ("in the bitter sea of Auschwitz"), in the same passage, however, he had to retain the letter twice (avoiding rabbinical abbreviations) and include it once (209-10).

This reviewer was unable to confirm Jeffrey's claim that "Yeshua Shmi" ("my name is Jesus") occurs in Isa 53:10—it did not compute. The same can be said of "Yoshiah" ("he will save") in Gen 3:20. Based on these few samples, this reviewer is sure that most claims are either completely false or involve the manipulation of either text or numbers allowing for aberrations that produced the desired conclusion. Arbitrary omission and inclusion of letters in accordance with some rabbinical abbreviations clearly forces the text to fit preconceived notions.

Utilizing the same technique of equidistant letter sequences, computer-

aided research has revealed references to 13 assassinations of world leaders in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Melville's book was published in 1851. One of the assassination references is to Indira Ghandi's death in 1984. Is *Moby Dick* to be considered divinely inspired?

Caution is commended any time someone claims that God has hidden something for centuries in order to reveal the secrets to him/her at the end of time. Jeffrey makes this claim repeatedly (204, 211, 246, 247). Such subjective theologizing confirms the dangerous errors contained in *The Signature of God*. The book and its views cannot be recommended by anyone who believes in the unique nature of the inspiration of Scripture.

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996. 808 pp. (cloth). \$29.99. Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This work is one of the best recent evangelical works on problem texts. As a re-editing of four previous books, now combined in one volume, it adds new material on more than a hundred verses. It includes a Subject Index and a Scripture Index. A general introduction answers twelve questions, such as "How Do We Know Who Wrote the Bible?" Other questions are on matters like how we can believe in miracles, why God is angry (OT), then loving (NT), so-called discrepancies in numbers, whether archaeology supports the Bible, whether prophecies are accurate, NT quotes of the OT, and why there are four gospels. From the introduction on, the book lists 64 Bible books consecutively and discusses problem passages in sequence (it omits Obadiah and Zephaniah).

Kaiser does all the OT, Bruce the synoptics, Brauch Paul's letters, and Davids the remaining NT books. The writers purportedly believe in inspiration of Scripture, though the four differ in how they define inspiration, as evidenced by viewpoints they express that some readers will regard as explaining Scripture away rather than explaining it from a high view of Scripture.

Sometimes references guide users to other passages or introductory essays that supplement what is said (e. g., Gen 2:17 on death, linked with Rom 5:12). Where dealing with the same problem, different authors at times have varying explanations.

Kaiser says that a study of the OT problems helps in texts where no explanation seems to be offered in Scripture. Its other benefits include helping to understand when passages allegedly contradict other biblical texts; enabling a sharper understanding of God's Word and consequently spiritual growth; trying the believer's faith, patience, and commitment; illumining idioms; showing credibility and not collusion between writers of Scripture; overcoming doubts; helping to see

in the explanations the unity in the Bible; allowing one to see apparent reasons difficulties arise (multiple names for some people or places, different methods of figuring official years, abbreviated accounts, sayings in which the meaning is hard to grasp); and many more.

The work contains a profitable survey on “The History of Hard Sayings” (32-34). This study traces the history of interpreting these from early treatises such as those by Eusebius, Chrysostom, and Augustine to the present. The section lists and dates many books and essays dealing with the topics. Among them in the last century and a half are: John Haley, 1874 and later printings, *An Examination of Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*; George DeHoff, 1950, *Alleged Bible Contradictions*, F. F. Bruce, 1972, *Answers to Questions*; Robert Mounce, 1979, *Answers to Questions About the Bible*; Gleason Archer, 1982, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, etc. Other works this discussion omits are E. J. Young, 1957, *Thy Word Is Truth*; William Neil, 1975, *What Jesus Really Meant*; Neil and Stephen Travis, 1979-1981, *More Difficult Sayings of Jesus*; William Arndt, 1932, *Bible Difficulties* and also 1926, *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?*; Robert Stein, 1996, *Interpreting Puzzling Texts in the New Testament*, combining three works of 1984-1988; Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, 1992, *When Critics Ask* (includes a section on 17 mistakes people make which bring texts into supposed error, 15-26).

Beyond this “History of Hard Sayings,” the volume includes a great assortment of books in connection with discussions of separate passages. Among these are OT and NT introductions, works on archaeology and the Bible, books on Bible chronology, Bible history, manners and customs, hermeneutics, biblical inerrancy, systematic theology, and particular issues such as the role of women in the church.

The present book has entries that discuss passages in detail and others that merely list another passage where relevant details appear. It has 50 listings on Genesis, 67 on 1 Samuel through 2 Chronicles, only 7 on Ezra/Nehemiah/Esther, 37 on Psalms, only 15 on Isaiah, just 7 on Jeremiah/Lamentations, 7 on Ezekiel, a mere 27 on the Minor Prophets, 78 on Matthew, 15 on John, 26 on Romans, and only 17 on the Revelation.

Readers, according to their convictions, will react differently to viewpoints.

The book denies that Gen 3:16 refers to a woman’s sexual desire for her husband or any order a husband is to observe in relation to his wife. It holds the text to mean that Eve, due to her sin, would turn from sole dependence on God to her husband, though God warns that the results of this curse will not be pleasant (98). Discussion on Gen 4:17 furnishes a good answer for where Cain got his wife; he married a sister; in those early days genetic possibilities of Adam and Eve were very good, with no biological reasons to bar marrying within the family as became necessary later (101). Five reasons support taking “sons of God” in Gen 6:2-4 to mean titularies from kings, nobles and aristocrats, despots craving power or renown (108).

The same discussion advances much reasoning against other views. Another place

views Melchizedek as a historical person, not the pre-incarnate Christ (120-21).

Some will question seeing the difference between 24,000 (Num 25:9) and 23,000 (1 Cor 10:8) as a slip (error) of memory by Paul. Here the writer assumes an error, then explains it away as if it were not an issue, since it does not bother Paul's purpose in the point he intends in 1 Corinthians 10. Also, the treatment of Joshua 10 does not understand the sun standing still as a miracle. The sun was simply hidden behind clouds during a thunderstorm, allowing coolness for Joshua's men to fight. To stop the sun and moon would cause a catastrophe for the entire planet due to the force of gravity. One can question this opinion in light of the sufficiency of the God who created heaven and earth; however, the writer on this problem does not deny God's infinite ability. In Judges 11, the writer sees Jephthah as sacrificing his daughter in death; no matter what one decides on this, he will have readers who passionately agree and others who strongly disagree. The book defends Ruth's decency on the threshing floor. Samuel really appeared in spirit when Saul visited at Endor (1 Samuel 28). A good discussion of imprecations appears (Pss 5:5; 137:8-9; 139:20). In Romans 12:20, the solution explains heaping burning coals on the head by an Egyptian custom and reasons from the context; it has a positive sense in line with Prov 25:21-22, bringing a person to repentance.

In another text, the writer defends Jesus' calling the mustard seed the smallest among seeds "you plant in the ground" (Mark 4:31). Jesus did not claim it to be smallest in all the world of botany. Romans 1:27 condemns homosexuality. The "thorn" (2 Cor 12:7) refers to a human opponent of Paul because of the OT use of thorns as a figure for enemies (Num 13:55 etc.), "messenger" always denoting a person in Paul's writings and because of 2 Corinthians 10-12 pursuing the basic topic of Paul's opponents. In 1 Tim 2:11-15, women who are not to teach are not to let persuasion by false teachers spur them to undermine authority of male leaders; outside of local problems here and in 1 Cor 14:33-40, women can have authority, without a curtailed life, says the problem solver. The entry misrepresents the view that the passages deal only with roles, not nature, when it says the "roles" view makes women in some sense "inferior" (666). Those taking the "roles" view have often sought to show that proper *subordination* taught by God does not at all suggest inferiority.

Comments on some passages will stir strong opposition from those who teach perseverance of the genuinely saved and the falling away of mere professors.

The entries on Heb 6:4-6, 2 Pet 1:10 and 2:20-22, and 1 John 5:16 all assume that those once saved can lose their salvation. And in Revelation, the 144,000 are Jewish and Gentile believers (763), while the "woman" (Chap. 12) is also both Israel and the church, i.e. Christians (767-68).

Clearly the book is a mixture of viewpoints. Different readers will judge its 808 pages as outstanding, mediocre, or less. In a great number of the cases it offers helpful summaries and is quite beneficial.

Kenneth A. Mathews. *Genesis 1–11:26*. Vol. 1A in *The New American Commentary*, ed. by E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1996. xvi + 528 pp. \$36.99 (cloth). Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Kenneth A. Mathews is Professor of Old Testament at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University. He is an acknowledged expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, textual criticism, biblical Hebrew, and the literary study of the Old Testament. Professor Mathews is co-author of *The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll* and also the Associate General Editor for the Old Testament commentaries in *The New American Commentary* series. *The New American Commentary* is the continuation of the tradition established by the older *An American Commentary* series under the editorship of Alvah Hovey at the end of the nineteenth century. In keeping with that tradition, the current series affirms “the divine inspiration, inerrancy, complete truthfulness, and full authority of the Bible” (from the Editors’ Preface). The format makes the materials available to layman and scholar alike. Technical points of grammar and syntax appear in the footnotes rather than in the text. The commentaries use the NIV translation, but individual commentators have the freedom to develop their own translations of the original text where they differ with the NIV.

A detailed 90-page introduction begins with a helpful outline of its contents (21-22). A brief outline of Genesis 1–11 commences the commentary proper (112). More detailed outlines precede subsequent commentary sections. Occasional charts are helpful in two ways: (1) providing detailed material pertinent to the discussion at hand and (2) visualizing the genealogical records. Three excellent charts fall into the first category. Two are tabulations of the chronologies of Genesis 5 (300) and 11:10-26 (495) according to the MT, LXX, and Samaritan Pentateuch. The other is a modification of Richard Longacre’s structural analysis of the flood narrative based on discourse type and linguistic features (354).

Excursuses present five topics in the commentary. They include the translation of 1:1-2 (136-44), the image of God (164-72), the human soul (197-99), the origin of civilization in ANE mythology (283-84), and the revelation of the divine name (293-94). Mathews favors a view of the image of God which includes the aspects of rulership and sonship.

Throughout the commentary, each major section begins with a discussion of literary structure and is usually followed by a presentation of the theological theme. Then it treats the pericope verse-by-verse, following the outline presented for the text. The text of NIV appears in bold type at regular intervals in the outline.

Transliterations of all Hebrew and Greek words and phrases are in the body of the text. The footnotes contain citations of the non-transliterated Hebrew and Greek.

Source materials, recommendations for further study, additional technical detail, and grammatical references come only in the footnotes. End materials include a person index and limited subject and Scripture indexes.

The commentary accepts Moses as the author/compiler of Genesis. Mathews shows a healthy respect for the contributions of historical and literary criticism but refuses to allow them to be forced upon the text. Mathews sees *tôledôt* references in Genesis as evidences of pre-Genesis sources that the author incorporated with certain modifications and a degree of elasticity (31-32). He utilized the formula to give the book unity and to employ genealogy to demonstrate the narrowing focus of the book as it progresses (34).

According to Mathews, Genesis 1–11 functions as the preamble for the Pentateuch. One of its themes is the promissory blessing of humanity (51). Human disobedience postponed in part that blessing and a fivefold cursing is encountered in Genesis 1–11. A fivefold blessing (Gen 12:1-3) through Abraham and his descendants as detailed in Genesis 12–Deuteronomy 34 counters the cursing.

Under the topic of the “Theology of Genesis” (54-63), Mathews discusses patriarchal promises (blessing, seed, and land), God and His world, human life, sin, civilization, and covenant. “Interpreting Genesis” (63-85) includes innerbiblical interpretation, Jewish interpretation, Christian interpretation, and Pentateuchal criticism. The last section covers source criticism, form and tradition history, revisionist trends, and traditional criticism as well as literary readings and canon. The author accepts a second-millennium date for the composition of the Pentateuch (79-80).

In his treatment of parallel ancient literature and Genesis (86-101), the commentator demonstrates a cautious consideration of such witnesses. Nothing has been discovered which compares directly with Genesis 1–11. The biblical pericope differs substantially from contemporary myths. Although the biblical text exhibits an undertone of repudiation, it does not contain an open disputation of the pagan concepts. The topics in the parallel literature discussed by Mathews include creation and mankind, Eden, long-lived patriarchs, and flood.

The final section of the introductory materials deals with creation and contemporary interpretation (101-11). Mathews accepts the biblical creationist viewpoint and refers to a number of recent scientific treatises espousing a designed universe and an ultimate Designer, God. The commentary was published before the author could include a reference to the most recent treatise in support of this view: Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (N. Y.: Free Press, 1996). Mathews concludes that Genesis 1–11 is a theological account grounded in history. He affirms its historicity, accuracy, and authority.

In the body of the commentary, the author reaches a number of significant conclusions. He supports the *ex nihilo* creation through the context rather than by means of the Hebrew term *bara'* (128-29). In his first detailed excursus, Mathews defends the view that Genesis 1:1-2 should be included in the first day of creation

without any “gap” or divine judgment (136-44). He waffles on the meaning of “day” in the creation narrative, ultimately deciding on a nonliteral sense even though a definite answer remains elusive (149).

The following are conclusions regarding some of the remaining exegetical cruxes in Genesis 1–11:

- 2:6 'd refers to underground streams (195-96)
- 2:9 The “tree of knowledge” was probably intended as one means by which God would have dispensed His wisdom to the man and the woman by permitting them to eat its fruit at His discretion (203-6).
- 2:23 Before the fall of man, the paradigm of leadership-followship in the man-woman relationship had been established as a creation ordinance. This paradigm is especially applied to the family (218-22).
- 3:15 The woman’s “seed” is a reference to Christ, but it also includes a dimension involving the believing community (247-48).
- 3:16 This verse is best understood by comparing it with 4:7b regarding the juxtaposition of “desire” and “rule.” The woman will attempt to control her husband, but she will not succeed since God has ordained his leadership (248-52).
- 4:3-4 God’s response to the offering of Cain was due to his attitude and integrity rather than to the identity or nature of the gift itself (268).
- 4:7 Cain had to make a choice between repentance and obstinance. Choosing repentance would give him the opportunity to master his sin. If he made the wrong choice, his sin would be stirred up to consume him (269-71).
- 4:26 The last part of the verse announces a new and decisive direction in worship for the descendants of Seth (291-93).
- 5:1-32 The MT text is preferable to the LXX. The genealogy is open, but, at maximum, it telescopes only a few millennia into the selective format (299-305).
- 6:1-4 Sethites (“sons of God”) married any women (“daughters of men”) they chose, including Cainite women. Their licentious lifestyle produced a time of unprecedented wickedness (320-39).
- 6:3 The reference to 120 years was the shortening of the average human life span from what it had been (335).

The commentary in general handles various exegetical issues fully and with attention to detail. In a few instances, however, it misses an opportunity for completeness. One example is in the discussion of the dietary prescriptions found in 1:29-30 (175) and 9:3-4 (400-402). At no time does Mathews introduce the concept of progressive revelation. In fact, he seems to avoid any suggestion of how the Bible interpreter might explain the differences in dietary prescriptions throughout the corpus of Scripture.

Another example of incompleteness occurs in the comments about the four rivers watering the garden of Eden (2:10-14; 207-8). Although the commentator discourages any identification with contemporary geography, he does not indicate that the primary reason would be the geographical and geological alterations resulting from a universal flood in the days of Noah. Mathews' failure to discuss this possibility is probably related more to his waffling on the universality of the deluge.

In one of the most disappointing sections of the commentary (that dealing with the Noahic flood), the author first admits that "there can be no dispute that the narrative depicts the flood in the language of a universal deluge." Then he leaves the door open for the opposite conclusion: "Yet if the report is a phenomenological depiction, permitting the possibility of a local flood, the meaning is not substantially altered: all that Noah and his generation know is swallowed up by the waters so that none survives" (380).

Except for a footnote on page 107 listing a few references to recent creationism, the author ignores the substantial body of literature that exists regarding a universal flood. In 76 pages of commentary regarding Noah, he recommends only one source to the readers (380) which specifically deals with the current discussion: S. Austin and D. Boardman, "Did Noah's Flood Cover the Entire World?" in *The Genesis Debate*, edited by R. Youngblood (Nashville: Nelson, 1986) 210-29. That unfortunate lack of even a cursory treatment of the key issues involved mars an otherwise very good commentary.

This reviewer looks forward to the publication of the remainder of Mathews' treatment of Genesis. If the other volumes of *The New American Commentary* are as well done, the series will have accomplished its goal of being the worthy successor of *An American Commentary*.

Floyd C. McElveen. *The Mormon Illusion: What the Bible Says about the Latter-Day Saints*. 3rd ed. Revised and expanded from original, 1977. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997. 223 pp. \$10.99 (paper). Reviewed by James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

McElveen, a convert to Christianity after zealous efforts of a Mormon to convince him otherwise, is a graduate of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon. He has been a missionary evangelist, church planter, pastor, and national evangelist for Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society. He adds to his earlier edition (Regal Books) Chap. 16 that contrasts the Mormon and biblical view of heaven, Appendix B answering the Mormon slogan that Christian ministers are paid hirelings, and four and a half pages annotating "Additional Resources."

Sixteen chapters are well-organized, and after them Appendixes A on the way of salvation and B (cf. above). Many citations are from Mormon sources,

and McElveen is both clear and concise in articulating how biblical claims are quite different from many Mormon points.

The Preface reasons that real love warns of error (10), and Christians are to exercise right judgment based on God's Word (Matt 7:24). An urgency compels the author to answer a religion that goes back to Joseph Smith. Smith first attacked all Christians and their churches as being wrong, their creeds as an abomination, all their professors as corrupt (10). McElveen documents a Mormon "apostle," Orson Pratt, long deceased, as writing that if Mormonism is false when examined diligently, this should be extensively published and arguments clearly, logically stated (11-12). The book urges a distinction between Mormonism (its claims) and Mormons, whom God loves and Christians should love (12).

Quite early, McElveen questions whether all Christians are corrupt, many of whom even sealed their witness with their blood. As for McElveen, discovery that he could know that he had eternal life (1 John 5:13) in Christ, which he could not know in Mormonism, was a great factor in his salvation.

The author points out contradictions in Mormonism often, such as claims that Smith's first vision was at age 14, other assertions that it was at 17, whether 1820 or 1823 (28). Another example is Smith's claim that he first saw an angel, yet the account that he saw the Father and the Son. Certain Smith prophecies did not come to pass (contra Deut 13:1-5). He claimed that the New Jerusalem and its temple (cf. Rev 21:22) would be built in Missouri in the generation related to 1832, which never occurred. He also claimed Jesus Christ's birthplace to be at Jerusalem (Book of Mormon, Alma 7:10) rather than Bethlehem, contrary to Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:1 (cf. further examples in Chap. 3).

Chapter 4 says that Smith claimed to receive the Book of Mormon (BM) in reformed Egyptian language given around A.D. 384 to 421, yet the King James Version of 1611 has many words in the same order in hundreds of instances. Even italicized KJV words appear in the BM, though not italicized there (46). Also, Mormons claimed the BM was from God and the most correct book on earth (46), yet Mormons found it necessary to make around 4,000 changes in grammar, punctuation, and word structure in the BM (cf. examples, 47). In Mormon belief, God was not God from all eternity. Rather he was once a man, a mortal, who by advancing progressively reached His exalted state. Man may also advance and become a god. Scripture represents God only as God, with nobody else becoming a god (Isa 43:10; 44:6; 46:9). He was eternally God (Ps 90:2). Chapter 7 develops this correction. Then Chap. 8 shows that Brigham Young taught often that Adam was God, which the Mormon church in more recent times has had to correct.

In Mormonism, Christ by a process attained to the status of godhood in his pre-existent state (72). Contrary to this, the Bible says that Christ was God from everlasting (Isa 9:6; Mic. 5:2; John 1:1). McElveen here fails to supply the reference in Mormon literature to their concept (72-73).

Mormonism uses the word "grace" but believes that man must by good

works make himself worthy of God's grace (74). Christ's death will save all the human race into at least a second, lower level of salvation, all but a few "sons of perdition." Second, Mormonism teaches a conditional individual salvation by grace plus baptism and works (that would leave out the thief on the cross) (145). Chapters 14-15 develop in detail that salvation is by grace, not works, and give examples of Mormons who became Christians by embracing this.

An interesting phenomenon is that Mormonism claims that all Christian statements or creeds are abominations, yet in many specifics translate these ideas verbatim into the Mormon creed, where they are holy before God (119). Mormon denial that Christians know God rightly seems strange. Many Christians showed the fruit of the Spirit, maintained unswerving love to Christ, some even giving their lives at the stake and in other ways for His sake.

Appendix A is useful as it points out sixteen concepts for Christians to go over with Mormon friends. These show the difference between what the Bible says and what Mormon writers say. Some of the points deal with the fact of one God, God's eternality, God not originating as a man, the second Person of the Trinity always was God, fulfillment testing a prophet's genuineness, etc.

The two-page bibliography lists both Christian and Mormon sources. Among Christian writings are famous works by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, such as *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Co., 1975). Additional resources list ten writings by the Tanners, many available through Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P. O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT 84110.

McElveen's book is a very readable, at times illustrated, mostly well-documented source that is one of the most usable popular tools for Christians witnessing to Mormons. The author fills it with frequent emphases on loving Mormons and seeking not to criticize them but to show them the truth and seek to win them to Christ. The book's style is one of the most engaging this reviewer has come across among popular books on the subject.

Donald K. McKim. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster-John Knox, 1996. 310 pp. \$15.95 (paper). Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Seminary Librarian.

One author recently called our time "the golden age of reference works" (Johnson, *Recent Reference Books in Religion* [InterVarsity, 1996] 9), and this reviewer would certainly agree with that assessment. In the last several years a number of outstanding reference works have appeared which have been of immense benefit to the busy pastor.

Adding to the list of recent reference tools is Donald McKim's *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Seeking to provide "short,

one-to-three sentence definitions of theological terms from some twenty-one theological disciplines" (v), the author has listed definitions for over 6,000 theological words and terms. He highlights mainly the history of doctrine by his precision in defining words, calling them "building blocks for Christian theology" (ibid). In the scope of his stated purpose, the author has provided a valuable tool for both student and pastor. The layout is well-conceived and the text is extremely readable. Greek and Hebrew words are transliterated and Latin words and phrases are italicized.

Though the work contains an abundance of "see" and "see also" reference pointers, it does not have nearly as many as one would hope. Occasionally entries are either too brief (cf.: "Reconstructionism") or incomplete (e.g., "Theonomy" where the word is defined only in light of Paul Tillich's usage). In cases of some more recent theological identities, such as "Progressive Dispensationalism" or "Vineyard Movement," the volume has no entry at all.

However, these are minor criticisms of an otherwise excellent book. Supplemented with a more thorough work such as the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker, 1986), this work will certainly find a ready place as a quick reference tool.