(pp. 76-79) provides a list of data concerning the rulers, together with Scripture references and dates; and Appendix C (pp. 80-85) furnishes coordinations between ancient astronomically established years and the dates of the Hebrew kings.

There is a short glossary of terms (pp. 87-89), which is obviously a useful inclusion in a book of this sort. A general index is lacking, but the Scripture index (pp. 91-93) will in any event probably prove more helpful for locating the type of information desired from this kind of publication.

Although this particular volume is much shorter than Thiele's *Mysterious Numbers*, it covers the essentials of the subject very well. In fact, it is truly amazing that so complex and extensive a subject could be treated in such a clear and effective manner in a book of fewer than 100 pages!

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Wogaman, J. Philip. *A Christian Method of Moral Judgment*. Philadelphia: West-
    minster, 1976. xi + 270 pp. $12.50/$6.95.

According to J. Philip Wogaman, we have entered an age of moral uncertainty. In this book, the Dean of Wesley Theological Seminary claims that the modern loss of confidence is world-wide, affecting both Christians and non-Christians. In the past, Christians may have relied uncritically on the Bible, the Church, natural law, or simply on custom. But such absolute trust no longer seems tenable. The net effect has been to increase uncertainty at a time when moral dilemmas have increased in complexity. But in spite of the uncertainties, Wogaman argues that Christian faith must be capable of guiding our moral decisions, or else such faith is surely nonsense. The question is: What method of moral judgment can be consistent with a whole-hearted commitment to the values of the Christian faith while realistically taking into account the inevitable uncertainties of all human decision-making?

Wogaman believes that the method he offers has such a capacity. Moreover, he believes that his approach avoids the deficiencies of situation ethics on the one hand and of a more rule-oriented ethic on the other. Situation ethics, because it is basically intuitive, is inadequate and can bring but little precision to our moral decision-making. The anti-situationalists, on the other hand, have failed to provide a convincing method of judgment which properly takes into account the "margin of uncertainty" which must be considered in the application of any moral decision.

Wogaman calls his own approach one of "methodological presumption." A moral presumption is a considered *pre*judgment. It is a strong bias in favor of a moral value or course of moral action. Wogaman's analogy is the Anglo-American legal system's presumption of innocence for the accused. Such presumptions are not exceptionless, but any exception must meet stiff criteria. As Wogaman puts it, the exception must "bear the burden of proof." E.g., one exception-making criterion is that an action contrary to a moral presumption will likely produce more good in the long run. But if after consideration of the exception doubt still remains, then the moral presumption stands.

Can such moral presumptions be derived from the Christian faith? Wogaman thinks so. He offers as examples four positive and two negative moral presumptions. On the positive side, he claims that Christian faith presumes (1) the goodness of created existence, (2) the value of individual life, (3) the unity of all humanity, and (4) the equality of each person. And on the negative side, Christianity teaches that humans are (1) finite and (2) sinful. Wogaman also discusses several other kinds of presumptions supposedly derived from the Christian faith, including presumptions of human

authority (e.g., the church has presumptive moral authority) and presumptions of ideology (e.g., fascism and anarchism are presumed to be wrong).

No reader is likely to agree with all of Wogaman's conclusions. But his crisp and highly readable style, his frequent use of apt illustrations, and his willingness to tackle difficult methodological issues without heavy reliance on technical language have combined to produce a work which should be interesting to professionals in the field and yet understandable for college undergraduates. In terms of its range of topics and general purpose, Wogaman's work might be compared to Edward LeRoy Long's *A Survey of Christian Ethics* (New York, 1967). But Long's book is unquestionably more technical and detailed in its presentation, a fact which may lead to the fairly safe conclusion that Wogaman's publication will gain a far wider usage.

The book is not dazzling in its originality. Nor is it likely to generate as much commotion as J. F. Fletcher's *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia, 1966). But to this reviewer the method of stating and defending general principles and setting forth exception-making criteria is far more plausible than Fletcher's approach. Wogaman criticizes anti-situationalists like Paul Ramsey and John C. Bennett early in the book. But on balance, Wogaman's method seems far closer to these two thinkers than to either the situationalists or to those Wogaman dubs "evangelical perfectionists," such as John Howard Yoder and Jacques Ellul.

The similarities are especially conspicuous when Wogaman is compared with Bennett. Indeed, though differing in scope, the one recent book in Christian ethics which seems closest to Wogaman's in methodology and general spirit is Bennett's *The Radical Imperative* (Philadelphia, 1975). Both Bennett and Wogaman concern themselves primarily with the application of Christian faith to the problems of contemporary social ethics. Both find the approach of situation ethics less than adequate. Both tend to state general principles such as human unity and human equality. And both emphasize that exceptions to generally valid moral principles must bear a heavy burden of proof. (In fact, even the phraseology is sometimes similar, with Bennett also using the expression "burden of proof.") Although they both wish to maintain the importance of Christian faith for the construction of an ethical system, neither Wogaman nor Bennett believes that Christians have a monopoly on morality or that non-Christians do not share many of the same moral insights. Both take sin seriously and recognize the ambiguities of many moral decisions. Considering these and other areas of agreement, it is probably not surprising that their conclusions on a variety of social ethical questions are remarkably similar.

There are, of course, notable differences. And one of those differences reveals a fairly obvious weakness of Wogaman's book. Bennett devotes an entire chapter to the way in which ethical guidance is derived from biblical sources. But Wogaman leaves the reader with little explicit information about how he uses the Bible to aid in the establishment of Christian moral presumptions. Early in the book he tells his readers that the moral authority of the Bible has been weakened by the realization that the biblical writers were "flesh-and-blood human beings writing in quite human circumstances" (p. 6). Later he says that the Bible contains a variety of materials with different levels of meaning. But even though he spends one whole chapter on the moral presumptions of human authority, nowhere does he establish in what sense the Bible may retain moral authority.

Nevertheless, Wogaman clearly believes that his moral presumptions have biblical bases. And from observing the way he uses the biblical material, perhaps one may draw some conclusions about the methodology he considers appropriate. But occasionally he argues that some biblical teachings *counter* the moral presumptions of the Christian faith. E.g., he considers that the apostle Paul may unfortunately have conveyed a negative view of sex. But the moral presumption of the goodness of

created existence implies that sexual life is good. Thus, the moral presumption apparently may be used to evaluate the Pauline message. The trouble is that Wogaman does not develop a methodology which would allow some biblical passages to be used to support moral presumptions, which presumptions may in turn be used to evaluate the moral worth of other biblical passages. Yet, in spite of this lack of methodological clarity, Wogaman does not hesitate to reassure the reader that a particular moral presumption is "solidly biblical."

On this point, Wogaman's work would surely have been strengthened by some timely advice from two of his colleagues at Wesley Theological Seminary, Bruce Birch and Larry Rasmussen. In their provocative book, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life* (Minneapolis, 1976), they discuss the problem of relating the field of biblical scholarship to contemporary Christian ethics. "It is time," they say, "to make the connections between these fields and to assist in the functional relating of Bible and ethics in the Christian life" (p. 12). For all of its admirable clarity and thoroughness, Wogaman's book needs strengthening in this area. No method of moral judgment called Christian is likely to be deemed plausible so long as the role of the Bible is not clarified.

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Wolff, Hans Walter. *Joel and Amos.* Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977. xxiv + 392 pp. $22.95.

This is the second OT volume to appear in the new Hermeneia commentary series, the preceding volume, *Hosea*, also being written by Wolff. This new volume was originally published in German as vol. 14/2 of the Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament (of which Wolff is the editor), and three North American scholars co-operated in its translation. Wolff has also published another study on Amos, *Amos the Prophet* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973 [originally *Amos' geistige Heimat*, 1964]), which deals largely with matters of introduction and form criticism.

The present volume begins with eighty pages on Joel and concludes with 270 pages on Amos. It includes an updated bibliography and indexes of biblical citations, ancient sources, modern authors, Hebrew words, and topics treated. Each passage of text proceeds through a fourfold treatment: translation with notes, form-critical observations, interpretation or exegesis, and aim or theology. This format was also followed in Wolff's work on Hosea, and it seems to provide a useful layout of information with which to study these prophets.

As far as content is concerned, most of my remarks will deal with Amos, but brief mention should be made of Joel. Wolff has argued forcefully for the unity of Joel, and he has summarized succinctly the important theme of the Day of Yahweh. The date of Joel is a controversial point in OT circles, and one can find almost any date imaginable suggested for it. Even for so controversial a subject, however, Wolff's date in the first half of the fourth century seems too late to me.

Wolff holds that Amos' career was relatively short but not ultrashort, a conclusion with which I concur. He also holds that Amos may have prophesied in several centers of the northern kingdom, but I would prefer to see this prophet's ministry restricted to Bethel. The richness of Amos' language and poetic style have been explored well by Wolff in his introduction. Chiasm could be added to the catalogue of poetic techniques of which Amos was fond, for I count more than thirty chiastic bicola in his work. As far as the final form of the book is concerned, Wolff sees this as the end product of a long history of literary growth, a natural deduction from Wolff's form