

Despite what could have been done with infinite space, finances, wisdom, and foresight; Burgess, McGee, and Alexander are to be thanked and congratulated for what they have accomplished in a finite volume that covers a complex, diverse, and illusive field of study. Their *Dictionary* is a pioneering reference work that is a welcome contribution in a neglected area. It joins the ranks of essential reference tools for students of modern Christianity.

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Cassidy, Richard J. *Society and Politics in Acts of the Apostles*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987. 255 pp. Paperback, \$9.95.

Society and Politics in Acts of the Apostles is a concise yet thought-provoking treatise in straightforward style and simple language. As is true of his first tome, *Jesus, Society and Politics*, this work is highlighted by Richard Cassidy's innovative "Allegiance Theory" and backed by logical and forceful arguments. The book purports to do away with the traditionally held theories that the Book of Acts was written out of apologetical (political or ecclesial) concerns—i.e., to present either the innocuousness of Christianity before Roman authorities, or the benevolence of the Roman government before the Christian world.

Recognizing the weakness in the apologetical approaches, Cassidy suggests his "Allegiance Theory" as an alternate and more plausible approach to the understanding of the purpose for the writing of Acts. According to this theory, Acts was originally addressed to the Christian community at large (Theophilus here is either a prospective or converted Christian) to strengthen their faith and confirm them in their witnessing of, and allegiance to, Jesus. Acts, according to Cassidy, was "to provide the Christians of his [Luke's] days with perspective and guidance regarding the trial witness of Christians before various political officials" (p. 159).

Cassidy divides his book into two logical parts. The first ten chapters build evidence which he hopes will disprove the apologetical approaches (against Conzelmann and Walaskay), and the last chapter presents his "Allegiance Theory."

In the first three chapters Cassidy associates Jesus' sociopolitical stance with that of the Jerusalem community. His purpose is to show that for the disciples (as in the case of Jesus) to place the sovereign will of God over any political power was indeed a matter of concern and threat to the Roman authorities. The objective of chaps. 4-8 is very similar. Cassidy highlights Paul's constant clashes with non-Roman opponents ("Jewish-law" Christians and "unbelieving" Jews) in order to make clear the need for Rome's intervention. Thus Cassidy wishes to show the threat that the disciples' "disruptive" behavior posed for the Romans. In chap. 8 the

author openly makes a more specific charge against the apologetical approaches by calling into question the view that seeks to picture the Romans as benefactors and protectors of Christianity. Attention is called to the unjust treatment Paul receives from Lysias, Felix, and Festus, who act out of selfish motives at times by wanting to turn Paul over to the Jewish authorities in order to gain their favor. Chaps. 9 and 10 are left for methodological considerations, while the last chapter concentrates on Cassidy's "Allegiance Theory."

In short, two things are evident throughout Cassidy's book: (1) notwithstanding the fact that Christians cannot be classified as zealots, their political (God as supreme King) and social (disapproval of oppression) stance may bring disruptive consequences which threaten the Romans (against political apologetics); (2) Roman procedures are not congenial to Christian concerns. Cognizant of Paul's innocence and regardless of the fact that charges have not been substantiated, they nevertheless kept him a Roman prisoner for more than two years (against ecclesial apologetics).

Admittedly, there are several loose caveats in the apologetical theories. Yet Cassidy's exegesis is not totally convincing. The author fails to make a clear distinction between the charges brought against the disciples and the Roman officials' assessment of the veracity of the charges. Indeed, circumstances and self-interest prevented some Roman officials from dealing justly with Paul. But again, this only underscores their guilt, it does not disparage their assessment of Paul's innocence. Cassidy also seems oblivious to certain preferential treatments Paul received from Roman officials. For example, the centurion's sparing of Paul at the shipwreck (Acts 27:42, 43), and Julius's humane treatment of Paul (Acts 27:3). Neither does Cassidy reckon with the fact that disturbances most often arose out of Jewish incitation and not out of the supposed threat Christianity posed to the Romans. As a matter of fact, Luke never portrays the Roman authorities as taking the initiative against Paul or the disciples—which could be expected of authorities feeling threatened by such a sociopolitical stance.

As regards methodology, two things should be said. First, Cassidy is to be commended for his innovative "Allegiance Theory." Starting from a redaction-criticism stance, he takes the text very seriously. Passages not accounted for by the apologetical approaches of Conzelmann and Walaskay are taken into consideration. Otherwise unexplained trial and witnessing passages in Acts receive the plausible explanation that Luke intended Acts to be an instructional manual for Christian trial witnessing. Second, despite the well-organized nature of Cassidy's book, it is bewildering that methodological considerations are discussed as late as chap. 9, especially considering the fact that the book's fundamental thesis lies in a preceding volume (*Jesus, Society and Politics*).

All things considered, *Society and Politics in Acts of the Apostles* is a pioneering work, containing worthwhile insights which will undoubtedly promote stimulating discussion. Indeed, after reading this seminal work, it

will be difficult for anyone treating the subject not to come into direct or indirect dialogue with Cassidy.

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Craigie, Peter C. *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986. 351 pp. \$18.95.

Peter Craigie attempts throughout this work to present the views of both modern, mainline, historical-critical scholars and traditional, conservative scholars on OT literature. Thus one finds fair and concise descriptions of varying views on composition and date for each OT book. In this respect, *The Old Testament* is a work of great balance. Craigie often sees value in positions with which he may not agree, and he offers a level-headed critique of entrenched positions on both the liberal and conservative sides of scholarship.

The work is divided into five parts. Part 1 introduces the book and deals with "The Phenomenon of the Old Testament." It contains brief but informative discussions of the nature of the OT, the titles of its separate books, the canon and formation of the entire Hebrew Bible, its languages and chronological perspectives, the preservation of its texts, its place in contemporary religions, and its relationship to the humanities. In the latter two sections Craigie illustrates the pervasiveness of the OT's influence in modern secular society and thus demonstrates the need to understand the OT.

Craigie excels in part 2, "Background of the Old Testament Period," in which he describes the important civilizations of the ancient Near East that contribute to an understanding of Israel's culture and literature. In the first half Craigie places the summarized OT story in the context of historical developments in the great civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. In a second subdivision he discusses the value and admitted limits of archaeology in enhancing our understanding of the OT.

Part 3, the longest portion of the book (150 pp.), deals with the individual OT books. Here, in conformity with his opening remarks on canonization, Craigie deals with the literature in its Hebrew canonical order.

Craigie describes the "Content of the Old Testament" in part 4 in chapters entitled "The History of Israel" and "The Religion and Faith of Israel." Here the reader is confronted with problems and perspectives in the study of Israel's history. Craigie recognizes that the historical narratives are written from a theological perspective, using (from the modern his-