

quaintance with Wesley, it will certainly occupy a major place in scholarly circles for a considerable time to come.

The Wesleyan Theological Heritage is comprised of a series of fifteen selected essays written from 1961 to 1988 by Albert Outler, the late dean of British Wesleyan studies. This work is an ideal companion volume to those chapters in Rack's book (mainly chaps. 11 and 12) which deal with Wesley's theology. Whereas Rack sees Wesley's theology to a considerable extent as a response to the needs of the revival, Outler has made a meticulous investigation of the root sources of Wesley's theology. Outler thus approaches Wesley's theology from exactly the opposite direction from that of Rack. Nobody has been as well qualified to approach Wesley's theology this way as Outler, with his preparation in patristics, his long immersion in the Wesley writings in the production of the *John Wesley* volume in *A Library of Protestant Thought*, and the preparation of the four volumes of Wesley sermons for the Bicentennial Edition.

Most of the essays reproduced in this volume have been published before, but in scattered places, and have been difficult for the newcomer to Wesley studies to locate and assemble. The volume avoids unnecessary duplication in that it does not reproduce essays to be found within the more commonly available Wesley literature.

The informed Wesley scholar will have read many of these essays over the years, but this by no means detracts from the sheer delight of reading them at a single sitting and experiencing the cumulative force of the problems to which Outler subjects Wesley and the conclusions Outler develops. The difference between the methodologies which Rack and Outler employ in analyzing Wesley's theology is wide, and in spite of the Wesleyan commonalities that unite them, their conclusions regarding Wesley's theology differ considerably. The two books should provide the basis for more than one stimulating seminar debate.

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RUSSELL L. STAPLES

Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. 357 pp. \$28.95.

In this commentary Robertson treats some of the neglected "minor" prophets in the prestigious NICOT series. Since the author has taught for two decades in well-known theological schools (Westminster and Covenant) and is currently pastoring a church, one expects a combination of interest in both the message of these three prophetic books and its application to the modern situation. The reader will not be disappointed: applications are made throughout to the modern situation.

Robertson holds that "there is a close-knit bond between prophecy and history." He argues that "the events that occurred to Judah and its neighbors spoke in anticipation of world-shaking circumstances that were yet to come" (p. vii). It is maintained throughout the commentary that "if successive divine judgments on ungodly nations have a prophetic dimension, then people and nations of today must take heed" (ibid.).

The historical survey of the times of the three prophets under discussion is cast in the framework of a "redemptive-historical setting" (pp. 1-17). "Theological perspective" (pp. 17-25) is the heading for what may be called a brief "theology" of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. Special discussion is devoted to the virtual lack of messianism in these prophets. On the other hand, major emphasis is given to the justice, judgment, covenant, and salvation of God. It is concluded that "the love of God for a sinful people functions as the key factor in the salvational activity of God" (p. 24).

Nahum is said to derive most likely from the last days of the reign of Manasseh, ca. 642 B.C. Zephaniah must have had access to the "book of the law" (Deuteronomy) found in the days of Josiah, and his book is to be dated to the period shortly after its discovery in 622 B.C. Habakkuk, who functioned as a "cult prophet" (p. 37), is to be dated between 608 and 605 B.C. It is concluded that "the materials of the books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah present themselves as authentic words of the seventh-century prophets and should be treated as such" (p. 40).

The commentary proper of these three prophets is of rather varying lengths. Nahum is handled in about 80 pages, Habakkuk in 113 pages, and Zephaniah in 100 pages. The bibliography that concludes the introductory part of the commentary contains mostly articles. It includes but a handful of commentaries to which Robertson later refers. On this score the reader of NICOT expects more than has been provided.

A major issue in the book of Nahum is the relationship of the introductory psalm (Nah 1:2-8) to the remainder of the book. This part of the book is usually understood to provide a theological interpretation or introduction to the subsequent prophecies concerning the fall of Nineveh. Robertson is silent on this subject. He takes Nah 1:2-14 as its first unit and does not converse with scholars who divide the book differently, nor does he explain why his division is better.

Fortunately the usage of secondary literature in the writing of the commentary on Habakkuk is much better. A defense is provided for seeing the last chapter of the book as an integral part of the prophecy. The sensitivity to textual matters is also on a higher level.

The book of Zephaniah has the "day of Yahweh" as a "major organizational motif" (pp. 266-273). Robertson sees this motif as associated with the covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses and suggests that "the Day of Yahweh may be seen as the Day of his Covenant" (p. 268), an idea independently suggested also by D. Stuart in his 1989 commentary on Amos in the

Word Biblical Commentary series. These suggestions call for further investigation and attention.

It may be concluded that this volume of NICOT reflects a sound usage of the Hebrew text, a somewhat limited usage of literature on these prophets, a good grasp of literary characteristics of Hebrew poetry and its structures, and a sound approach to interpretation, with helpful applications to contemporary settings. Anyone reading this commentary will hear anew the prophetic call to live in a vital and dynamic faith relationship with the covenant God of old, who remains in charge of his people and the nations around them.

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GERHARD F. HASEL

Stanton, Graham N. *The Gospels and Jesus*. Oxford Bible Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. xiii + 296 pp. \$59.00.

Stanton has divided his book into two parts. Part 1, consisting of 7 chapters, is devoted primarily to the evangelists. Four of the chapters deal with the picture of Jesus left by each of the four canonical Gospels. A short chapter argues for the necessity of reading the Gospels at two levels: for what they say about Jesus and for what they say about the Christian congregations they come from. Another chapter tries to answer the question, What is a gospel? The last one looks at the noncanonical gospels from antiquity for their value in the reconstruction of the life of Jesus.

Part 2 attempts to recover the Jesus who is at the root of the Gospel traditions. Its first two chapters try to lay the groundwork for the search. They assess the nature of the evidence available and the best methods for dealing with it. The next seven chapters look at what Stanton considers to be important facets of Jesus' life. A final chapter summarizes by asking: Who was Jesus of Nazareth? The last twenty-two pages provide a bibliography arranged by chapters as suggestions for further study (here it is easy to argue for significant omissions), an index of passages cited, and a rather meager general index.

Only rarely does Stanton venture to argue for a particular view. This becomes a severe handicap, particularly in the presentation of the redactional work of the evangelists. The four chapters on the individual Gospels are bland. Most regrettably, the argument for reading the Gospels at two levels goes to waste because we are never told how the Gospels contributed to the life of their respective congregations.

A related criticism may be leveled at part 2. After having established criteria for evaluating the authenticity of reports about Jesus in the Gospels, Stanton only once appeals to one of them in order to argue for the authenticity of a saying. Based on the criterion of dissimilarity, Stanton affirms that