

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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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

the words, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her," are "undoubtedly authentic" (p. 244). To defend the authenticity of the inscription placed on the cross, "The King of the Jews," however, Stanton appeals to the "criterion of embarrassment," which, unfortunately, was not included in the discussion of criteria of authenticity.

Most unsatisfactory is the way in which the author probes the "self-consciousness" and the "intentions" of Jesus. For example, after declaring that the miracle stories have been used to serve quite diverse roles, Stanton affirms that they reveal the intention of Jesus (p. 217). If, for example, Jesus used the designations "Son of God" and "Son of man" to describe a role which any human being might undertake, why expect much from them as revealing a unique "self-consciousness"?

What is sorely missing is the recognition that the Jesus presented in the Gospels is most forcibly constrained by a sense of "the time." In an unguarded moment Stanton admits: "Jesus expected that in the 'last days,' which he believed to be imminent, the temple would be destroyed and replaced by some form of alternative access to God" (p. 266). Would an expectation for "some form" of an alternative have brought about the death of Jesus? Stanton never takes account of the social context of the messianic expectations inflaming Jewish life at the time. By contrast, Paula Fredriksen's *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven, 1988) is more satisfying.

Stanton advises that "it is all too easy for the modern scholar to make Jesus in his own image. That danger can be avoided only by assessing *all* the evidence equally rigorously—even the less congenial parts" (p. 273). While Stanton evidently has taken note of Albert Schweitzer's exposé of the dangers of drawing Jesus in the researcher's own image, he has overlooked Schweitzer's insistence that the most uncongenial, apocalyptic, first century must be taken seriously. Here Stanton fails according to his own standards. The book also fails vis-à-vis its exorbitant price!

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Thompson, Leonard L. *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. xiv + 265 pp. \$23.96.

Leonard L. Thompson's *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* is refreshing for its comprehensive approach to the matter of the social and political context of life in the Roman province of Asia at the close of the first Christian century. The book is also noteworthy for its suggestions concerning the place of John's Apocalypse within, or in relationship to, that context, novel (and perhaps faulty) as some of these suggestions may be.