

about revealed religion? Will a more "mature" faith evolve from the ashes of such a sociological creation of Israel's religious imagination?

Israel's Praise is a book that can make the reader mad, sad, and glad all at the same time. But it is a book that makes one think and think deeply. The best part, in which Brueggemann talks about pain as the matrix of praise, is to be found in pp. 129-160.

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Dybdahl, J. *Old Testament Grace*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1990. 152 pp. \$16.95.

Too often the Old Testament has been misunderstood by Christians. Since Marcion, the God of Law and Justice of the Old Testament has been opposed to the God of Grace and Love of the New Testament. For Dybdahl, God's personality is not split; the God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament (chap. 1). Stories (chap. 2), institutions, rituals and symbols (chap. 3), and texts and words (chap. 4) witness to the pervasive presence of grace in the Old Testament. Hence the author infers responses to grace (chap. 5) and addresses objections to the Old Testament grace (chap. 6). The Old Testament is not only for the Old Testament people; even the New Testament Christian can learn grace from the Old Testament (chap. 7). The author accompanies this biblical demonstration with modern anecdotes, mostly taken from his own experience. In fact, the whole book stems from within his personal conversion and spiritual pilgrimage.

The book is short, well organized, and clearly written. However, Old Testament grace is much more complex than it may appear through this sometimes sketchy presentation. Dybdahl's systematic, yet practical and rather homiletical discourse does not do full justice to the beauty and the richness of the Hebrew concept of grace. The many stories illustrating grace in the Old Testament do not include the Genesis creation account, God's act of grace *par excellence*. The author's choice of "grace-filled words" (95-98) is somewhat arbitrary. For instance, he does not mention the important word *rah'mim* (compassion, mercy), while he gives special treatment to the word *s'dāqāh*. The former is a technical word for grace—it is translated in the LXX by *charis* (grace), while the latter is not. Admittedly, the word *s'dāqāh*, which expresses rather the opposite idea of justice, is often associated with Hebrew words for grace (Pss 116:5; 141:5; 145:17; Prov 12:10; Mic 6:8; etc.), thus showing an affinity between the Hebrew concept of justice and grace (see p. 143). Words such as "truth" (Deut 6:8, 9, 12; Isa 49:15; Ps 89), "covenant" (Deut 7:9; Ps 25:10; Dan 9:4), "peace" (Num 6:25-26), "glory" (Ps 84:11; Exod 33:18-19), and "love"

(Jer 31:3; Deut 7:8, 13; Hos 2:19-20), which play a significant role in the semantic inquiry of grace, are missing from the picture.

Dybdahl rightly chooses an inductive approach to trace and examine the biblical idea of grace. However, this approach alone precludes the exposition of grace according to biblical books and sections. Thus, the importance of grace in the Wisdom Literature is minimized.

Other matters are not totally clear. In the beginning of the book, Dybdahl strongly argues against progressive revelation (14); in the end, he seems to support it (137). One may question the theological analysis of the concept of obedience broken down into three parts (hearing, trust, action [21]). Hebrew thinking suggests, on the contrary, a reverse process, in which the action precedes the cognitive consciousness and elaboration (see Exod 19:8; cf. 24:7; Josh 3).

Certainly biblical grace is bound to stay ever far beyond the reality of what is conveyed in human words. Dybdahl is well aware of the limitations of his enterprise, as he humbly recognizes the value of questions rather than "final answers" (138), thus inviting further research and thinking (145).

Throughout the book valuable insights will surprise and inspire the reader: the role of covenant as "God's gracious gift" (69); the value of worship, "the forgotten jewel of God's people" (107); the sequence of grace before the law (24-26); the message of corporate thinking for the individualistic Christian (135, 151-152); and many others. Undoubtedly *Old Testament Grace* deserves special notice. It will remind thoughtful readers of one of the most important forgotten truths of the Bible. Readers, whether laypersons or pastors, will discover new dimensions of grace, while refreshing and deepening their relationship with the God of the Old Testament.

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Efird, James M. *Revelation for Today: An Apocalyptic Approach*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989. 139 pp. Paperback, \$ 9.95.

James M. Efird has presented in his *Revelation for Today* a small volume "intended for pastors and laypersons in the church to assist them in learning how to interpret apocalyptic literature correctly, specifically the book of Revelation" (12-13). One must applaud this statement of purpose, but does Efird successfully accomplish this task?

His "Commentary" section (45-126) seems to me to be flawed in several ways relative to his objectives: (1) His discussion is tied too tightly to the traditional preterist perspective (for a good critique of certain basic aspects of the traditional view, see Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth*