

Fisher, Neal F. *The Parables of Jesus: Glimpses of God's Reign*. Rev. ed. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1990. xiv + 178 pp. Paperback, \$9.95.

A revised edition of a volume first published in 1979, Fisher's approach is to deal with the parables with respect to God's Reign. He arranges his book under three parts: Part I—The Coming of God's Reign; Part II—Entering God's Reign; Part III—Living in God's Reign. In his first edition he used the phrase "the New Age" but because of its current usage he has used "God's Reign" instead. At the end of each chapter, Fisher has a section on "Questions and Suggested Methods" for discussion. This shows the work is directed toward laypersons who would read and discuss the book in small groups.

In his early chapters Fisher attempts to indicate the similarity between our situation and that of Jesus' day, i.e., we are both living at the intersection of two epochs. At the end, again based on this similarity, he encourages us to bring about the kingdom in our age.

Fisher emphasizes that the parables are an invitation for us to participate in and make a decision for the Kingdom. Jesus offers us an alternative view of the world, at the same time interpreting what kind of persons we are.

In the foreword Fisher indicates he will not deal with literary questions. His objective rather is focused on the themes of Jesus in the parables. For this reason, the author does not advance any new approaches or methodologies. However, it would have been profitable to discuss the current status of parable interpretation to help laypersons understand how parables are being seen today. In making a comparison between the ages, it is not clear whether Fisher sees our time as unique in comparison to that of Jesus or whether this kind of situation is present throughout history.

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SAKAE KUBO

Hamilton, Victor. *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990. 944 pp. \$27.95.

*The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, by Victor P. Hamilton, is the first Genesis volume to appear in The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. The commentary itself is divided into two major divisions: "Introduction" and "Text and Commentary."

The "Introduction" has eight sections: "Title," "Structure," "Composition," "Theology," "Problems in Interpretation," "Canonicity," "The Hebrew Text," "Bibliography." The essays about Genesis' "Composition,"

"Theology," and "Problems in Interpretation" consume about 75 percent of the total introductory pages and well reflect the significance of those topics to an understanding of Genesis.

The "Text and Commentary" follows the outline of text-chapter divisions. Each section is conveniently titled according to its topic.

Hamilton writes from a cautiously conservative perspective. He is inclined to support the traditional interpretations of Genesis but is often influenced by alternative evidence. For example, he does not believe "that an evangelical view of Scripture is necessarily wedded to the Mosaic authorship of Genesis," although he feels that the evidence lends itself to the "unity of Genesis" with later editorial additions (38).

Hamilton's book illustrates, if unintentionally, why a growing number of scholars have become disillusioned with the extreme source-critical approach to biblical studies. On p. 16 he has collated from The Anchor Bible commentary of E. A. Speiser the widely accepted Genesis sources JEP. By putting these sources in chart form, Hamilton graphically demonstrates the immense editorial task an ancient editor would have faced in undertaking the compilation of the JEP sources, as many suppose. In addition, in his "Text and Commentary" section, Hamilton regularly offers uncomplicated, yet plausible, alternative suggestions for the subtleties of the text that JEP are supposed to represent (e.g., the use of *ādām*, 160). In doing so, Hamilton offers additional evidence that source analysis has been, at the least, overplayed.

As a commentary designed for a broad range of readers, the author has done an excellent job in noting items easily missed by non-Hebrew readers such as Hebrew word plays and other features (e.g., chiasms, 294, etc.). Many pastors and students will appreciate Hamilton's New Testament "Appropriations," which highlight NT uses of Genesis motifs and characters.

Difficult passages, such as the interpretation of God's words to Cain (4:7, 225-228) and the identity of the sons of God and the daughters of men in Gen 6:1-4, are logically treated, with organized suggestions offered (261-271). Hamilton is also not afraid to admit that at times there is no easy solution to a difficult passage (399).

There are a few curious features in this commentary. Not the least of these is the reason for ending the commentary with Genesis 17 instead of a more natural division. Readers may also be disappointed that Hamilton's introductory comments critique past and present scholars, often without clearly identifying his own perspective. Offering his own views without reference to a broader spectrum of ideas would have been unfair to his readers, but a historical critique without clear, concise statements supporting his own presuppositions may leave the reader unprepared to accept Hamilton's later textual interpretations. An example is Hamilton's

discussion, "The Patriarchs and History." By the end of this section we know the arguments of Wellhausen, Glueck, Albright (however, I believe Hamilton has misunderstood the nature of MBI [61] and, therefore, Albright's association of Abraham and the MBI period; see Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 82), Speiser, Gordon, Bright, Van Seters, and T. L. Thompson. I think the reader who uses Hamilton's commentary would have been helped by knowing whether Hamilton himself believed Abram was a historical character, and, if so, when Hamilton thought he lived, and why he had reached this conclusion.

Despite these few criticisms, *The Book of Genesis: Chapter 1-17* will be a useful commentary for pastors, students, and scholars.

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Harris, Murray J. *Colossians and Philemon*. Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990. xxix + 310. \$21.95.

Professor Harris of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School has taken, with Colossians and Philemon, a first step towards the completion of a twenty-volume exegetical guide of the Greek New Testament. Harris' experience as a teacher of Greek evidently sets the agenda for this work. He says the books are designed for "students tackling New Testament studies" and "preachers who wish to use the Greek text in their sermon preparation but whose knowledge of Greek has receded" (ii).

Harris wishes to "close that gap between stranded student (or former student) and daunting text and to bridge that gulf between morphological analysis and exegesis" (xiv). The author aims to help those who have already completed an introductory course in New Testament Greek (why he chooses Wenham as a model, I am not sure) and know the vocabulary with a frequency of 25 or more.

For each segment of the text (usually only a few verses) the guide contains the UBS Greek text, a structural analysis of the passage, a discussion of the passage, a translation, and an expanded paraphrase. Each section closes with a list of suggested topics for further study (with a bibliography for each) and homiletical suggestions for translating exegesis into sermon.

The core of the guide is the phrase-by-phrase discussion. However, the structural analysis, which Harris calls "a simple exercise in literary physiology—showing how the grammatical and conceptual parts of a paragraph are arranged and related" (xvi), lays the basis for the grammatical/exegetical study. Each phrase is studied in turn. Harris parses verbs and specifies cases. He considers syntax and textual problems