

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.

Andrews University

DAVID MERLING

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

as well. Throughout the discussion, reference is made to standard sources, such as BAGD, *TDNT*, Blass and Debrunner, and Metzger. The translations of many English versions are used to clarify the Greek meaning.

When several interpretations are possible, Harris marks the one he prefers, usually without specifying the reason for his choice. For example, he lists three possible translations of *katabrabeuetō*: "disqualify," "rob of a rightful prize," and "condemn"—each with its references. An asterisk marks the first selection as his preference (120).

Two translations follow each section of phrase-by-phrase discussion. The first is a clean, literal translation. The second is expanded, with phrases rearranged to read smoothly in modern American English.

Almost every section has one or more bibliographies for further study on questions raised. For example, the section on Col 1:15-20 lists three topics: "Christological Hymns in the New Testament" (7 sources), "Christ as the Head of the Church" (5 sources), and "Reconciliation in Paul" (7 sources) (53-54). Harris has marked those sources he finds most helpful. The books and articles are mostly recent and from Evangelical authors and publishers. P. T. O'Brien's commentary on Colossians from the Word series appears repeatedly.

Finally, each section closes with one or more "homiletical suggestions" for translating exegesis into preaching. For example, after the section on Col 1:3-8, the suggestions are: "Paul's Thanksgiving for the Colossians," "A Christian Partnership," "The Gospel," and "Epaphras the Colossian." Harris notes that the suggestions are "outlines representing the three basic kinds of preaching of the Bible" (xvii).

If one is to understand by "exegesis" a reasonable translation of the text, Harris has done the student community a great service in putting together a guide to grammar, vocabulary, and syntax for the books of Colossians and Philemon. If one understands that exegesis includes the interpretation and even application of the text, the sources to which Harris refers must be used to complete the task.

The introduction to Colossians is achieved in four pages (3-6). Without a study of the background of the Colossian heresy, Paul's message to the church in Colossae has only a limited meaning. Likewise, the simplicity of Harris' presentation does violence to the richness of the text.

The homiletical suggestions are brief. Perhaps Harris intended this brevity to allow the preacher freedom of imagination. At most, they would provide a few ideas.

Professor Harris's book would be profitable for a second-year Greek class. I should like to hear a report on its use in the classroom.