

Old Testament to render suspect the phrase "a common postexilic tradition." Would not most of the preexilic prophets also stand in this "postexilic" tradition? It would seem that more methodological rigor and conceptual precision are needed before one can convincingly and meaningfully speak of a Second Temple homiletical tradition.

Indeed, Mason's work raises a pressing question: Was there any real Jewish "homiletical activity" in the Persian period? While Mason explicitly links preaching to the practice of the Second Temple (258), one may recall that temples were primarily places of sacrifice, political administration, and economic storage and distribution. Our best evidence for Judean public assemblies is not in the temple, but in the public square (Ezra 10 and Neh 8). It is possible that homiletics developed more out of the discourses of the public forum than in a "religious" and cultic sphere. If so, the general exegetical search for a nonpolitical, "religious" reworking of postexilic Israelite traditions corresponding to the privatization of religion in our day may well be, at its very premise, a misguided effort.

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Stone, Michael Edward. *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. xxii + 496 pp. \$44.95.

The appearance of Michael Stone's commentary on 4 Ezra in the Hermeneia series of "biblical" commentaries testifies to the persistent scholarly interest in the intertestamental literature.

Stone is the right man for the job. Since receiving the assignment in 1965, he has published some 30 items with direct or indirect bearing on the book. His primary interests have been in the apocalyptic features of 4 Ezra and in its complex textual history, especially the Armenian tradition.

The format of the commentary follows standard Hermeneia style. After the discussion of introductory matters, the text is broken into sections following Stone's analysis. For each section, translation ("adapted from the RSV") and textual notes appear first, followed by "Form and Structure," "Function and Meaning," and "Commentary." The Commentary is truly verse-by-verse, with each verse listed separately. Even verses with no comment are clearly tagged with the line, "No commentary," a helpful touch.

Stone avoids conjectural reconstructions of the Hebrew original or the primary Greek translation, both of which are now lost. But he does provide detailed notes on the significant variants in the secondary and tertiary versions. While recognizing that the Latin and Syriac traditions are

still "the most important group of witnesses to the text of 4 Ezra" (3), he holds that the Ethiopic and Georgian, in particular, should be granted more weight than accorded them by the RSV translators (8). Thus Stone includes the account of Ezra's assumption at the end of 4 Ezra 14, a reading absent from the Latin but attested (with variations) by the Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic 1, and Armenian (437-438).

Stone's thorough work on the text does not overshadow other critical issues. He argues persuasively for the unity of 4 Ezra, rejecting the dissecting tendency popularized by Kabisch (1889) and Box (1912-1913). He joins the current debate over structure, unity, and purpose of the book, which focuses on the dialogue format and the tension between the complaining Ezra and the dogmatic Uriel. Central to Stone's approach is the view that the author found the solution to his agony in a conversion or "intensification" experience (326-327). There is no question about Ezra's transformation from complaint to affirmation. But opinions differ widely on the matter of how much (if any) of the "complaint" expressed in the first three episodes the author wanted his listeners to remember in the end. Stone is brilliant in analyzing how the author effected 4 Ezra's transformation from a literary point of view. His treatment of theological aspects is more mundane.

Two features of special interest to believing communities with apocalyptic roots are the eagle vision of 4 Ezra 11-12 and the account of Ezra's "inspiration" at the conclusion of chap. 14. In both cases Stone offers insights that are provocative, if not immediately self-evident in the text.

The eagle vision of 4 Ezra 12:11-12 gives a rare but clear example of an interpretation that changes with the times and is explicitly so labeled: a "new" identity for the fourth kingdom revealed to Daniel. Stone suggests that 4 Ezra claims "superiority" for Ezra's interpretation (360). Clearly the author of 4 Ezra offers a contemporary view, but to call it superior may be overstating the case. In any event, 4 Ezra is in good company, for the reapplication of prophetic and apocalyptic passages is well attested in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

As for "inspiration" in 4 Ezra, a major excursus (119-124) develops the thesis that the scene where Ezra is "inspired" to write the corpus of sacred literature (14:37-48) finds consistent parallels in the other visions as well. As a result, Stone argues for a unified view of inspiration throughout the book. While his analysis of the parallel features is intriguing, in essential elements the final scene differs markedly from the others. Previously, Ezra is the active mind to whom God speaks; in the closing scene he is the passive instrument through whom God speaks. Stone cites Philo's *De ebrietate* for graphic and conceptual parallels with the divine dictation which Ezra's fiery liquid produces (120). But from a descriptive point of view, that episode is unique rather than normative, just as

Balaam's experience with "dictation" (Num 23:12) is similarly unique rather than normative for canonical literature.

The commentary is well written, well documented; it is sober but stimulating. Serious students of the intertestamental era will value it highly.

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### SOFTWARE REVIEW

Logos. Logos Research Systems, 26 W. Route 70 - Suite 270, Marlton, NJ 08053. Tel. 609-983-5766 or 1-800-87 LOGOS. \$149.00.

The introduction of *Logos* marks a new turn in Bible software. Indeed, *Logos* is the first Bible study program specifically designed for Windows, which exploits the program's most important features. A few other Bible search programs for Windows are available (e.g., *Word of God for Windows*); so far none matches *Logos*.

*Logos* comes with two English versions of the Bible, the KJV and the RSV. The "Book Scroll" and "Chapter Scroll" buttons illustrate the user-friendliness of *Logos*: they allow the user to switch from one chapter or book of the Bible to another. Keyboard short-cuts are available to perform those commands, most helpful for those who are making the transition from DOS-based Bible programs to *Logos*.

*Logos'* most interesting feature is probably the search command which includes four modes: (1) The well-known Strong's Concordance search allows the location of all occurrences of a given Strong number. (For instance, the word "Thessalonians" is defined as number 2331 and occurs 4 times in the NT.) (2) The "Approximate Search" is the slowest method but a remarkably powerful one in that it gives the user the ability and flexibility to adjust the search sensitivity via a sliding button. By using this method, approximate wordings or misspellings will still allow the location of the words searched. (3) The third method is the "Phrase Search." Although this method is not fast, it allows the user to search for expressions or specific phrases. Whether the search is case sensitive or not is a user-defined option. (4) The fourth method is by far the fastest, most efficient, and most precise. Wildcard searches are possible (e.g., a search for the string "kind\*" would display all the occurrences of the words "kind," "kindness," "kindly," etc.). Boolean searches allow the use of AND, OR, ANDNOT, and XOR operators. A combination of the different methods produces an extremely complex and highly precise search, which, as far as I know, is not available yet in any other affordable Bible program.