

The book is subdivided into three logical sections: (1) the Bible (3-44), covering the OT and NT; (2) the Hebrew Bible (45-151), with three subsections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings; and (3) the NT (331-500).

Each bibliographical reference is numbered (thus allowing cross-referencing) and is followed by a brief annotation. These annotations, which usually summarize the content of the book or article, represent a real asset to biblical research. When two or more articles are interrelated or respond to each other, the fact has been noted whenever possible (see, for instance, #1422, p. 317; #1241, p. 280; #2234, p. 496). The author index at the end adds to the practicality and usefulness of the book.

Minor does not claim that this compilation is a comprehensive one. And there is indeed omitted material that corresponds to the author's criteria. To mention just a few items, one can cite S. G. Brown, "The Structure of Ecclesiastes," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 14 (1990): 195-208; L. J. de Regt, *A Parametric Model for Syntactic Studies of a Textual Corpus, Demonstrated on the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 1-30* (Assen/Maastricht, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1988); and T. E. Boomershine, "The Structure of Narrative Rhetoric in Gen 2-3" *Semeia* 18 (1980), 113-129. However, these omissions do not alter the quality of this book, since its intent is to provide not a complete bibliographical reference (if such a thing is possible) but a reference tool on books of the Bible and topics related to literary criticism.

Scholars from all persuasions who have an interest in biblical hermeneutic, literary criticism and related studies, and biblical exegesis, will benefit from this compilation, which sheds light on the relationship between biblical and literary studies. Unique in its field, Minor's work is indeed a valuable tool that biblical scholars should include in their libraries.

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Neusner, Jacob. *Israel's Love Affair with God: Song of Songs*. The Bible of Judaism Library. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1992. 152 pp. Paper, \$14.95.

The title of Neusner's latest interpretive work is misleading, but the scholarly effort represented here is successful and valuable. The book is not a commentary or theological exposition of Canticles itself, nor is it a full commentary on the Song of Songs Rabbah. It is instead a short treatise which introduces this midrashic Rabbah and teaches the modern (especially non-Jewish) reader how to comprehend and appreciate this literature of Talmudic Judaism. Neusner is right to select only a few passages from the Rabbah for comment, as these are sufficient to illustrate how Judaism of the sixth-century (C.E.) dual Torah was reading its treasure of Scripture.

Because so much of this midrashic literature is a closed book to the modern scholar of religion, the author helpfully makes his first expositional chapter (chap. 2) the longest; it is an extensive, careful commentary on the

midrash of Song of Songs 1:2. With Neusner's assistance the reader will indeed see that there is an order and a method to the rabbinic interpretation of this postclassical work. Because this chapter is so successful, Neusner is able in the succeeding ones to guide the reader through the apparent maze of stored-up traditional interpretation with considerable brevity. What one finds here is the product of a serious and devout group of Bible students who desired over the decades to leave nothing to chance in their understanding of God's law for the new Israel.

The non-Jewish historian of Christian antiquity may find a genuine fascination with the ways that this ancient community thought and argued about its privileged relationship to a loving God. Beyond this, the careful Christian reader will also find the use of an allegorical and "quasilogical" style which, in antiquity, resembled the interpretation and preaching of contemporary Christians. But because this is Jewish devotional literature, one will also be reminded of similar patterns of thought and expression in those earlier Christian documents which share some common features with Mishnaic (and pre-Mishnaic) Judaism, namely the four canonical Gospels and some of Paul's digressive, "hit and run" exposition.

Major points of concern are as follows: first, the last chapter ("Symbolism and Theology in Judaism") contains general explanatory content (with examples taken from the *Genesis Rabbah*) and thus would serve much better as the book's introductory chapter. In its present position it spoils the sense of "homeness" which the rest of Neusner's exposition creates, and one may sense (with the reviewer) an abrupt and unfortunate change of subject. Likewise, chapter one, which really offers a better summary of the *Rabbah's* main theological contributions, should be placed last.

The really unsatisfactory thing about his last chapter, however, is that Neusner's simple and correct definition of symbolism does not suffice to explain the source or the "why" of all the diverse but scriptural "contact points" which the "*Rabbah*" finds. It is one thing to recognize from this distance that the rabbis saw many connections between the words or phrases within their text and the historic events and institutions of ancient Israel. But this understanding of symbolism (that one thing may stand for many more different things) simply does not account for all of these "guesses" about what those words and textual ideas mean. Nor does it begin to answer the most obvious questions: why did the rabbis come to see such things in the Bible, and *how* did they arrive at the various meanings for each word-symbol? Neusner does not attempt to answer this question, which his chosen text begs of any non-Jewish scholar of religion. Nevertheless, we owe him a real debt in once again opening wide the door to this treasury of ancient biblical interpretation.

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