

devotes no less than 350 pages to his analysis of the intercalations. Shepherd is to be commended for his endurance and for the painstaking work in analyzing these passages as well as for shedding much light on the Markan literary techniques. But the findings do not seem to be in direct proportion to the amount of work spent in analyzing the masses of data. From a purely pragmatic perspective one must ask the question about the results of the minute and painstaking work that has gone into this dissertation. Shepherd himself seems to be content with his findings, for he concludes that the intercalations as a storytelling technique bring the reader to the realization that "he must answer for himself who Jesus is and what his own discipleship requires." It seems a bit ironic that, after his dismissal of both form-and-redaction critical approaches, he should come to an almost identical conclusion as Albert Schweitzer in his book, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, who points out that "they will learn in their own experience Who He is," and who also points out the requirements of discipleship (403).

While one cannot minimize the importance of narrative analysis in Gospel research, it is only one part of the exegetical task. Equally important is the concern for the historical context of a given story. Without that, the interpretation of the text becomes a subjective enterprise.

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Smith, Gary V. *The Prophets as Preachers: Transforming the Mind of Humanity*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994. 480 pp. \$24.99.

Gary V. Smith, Old Testament professor at Bethel Theological Seminary, offers an introduction to the OT prophetic literature from a sociological and communicative point of view. Smith's basic thesis is that "the hermeneutical task of interpreting the prophets involves not only the analysis of their theology but also their social interaction with their audience through communication" (23-24).

In the first two chapters, Smith lays the theoretical basis of his understanding of communicative theory and the sociology of knowledge. In chapter 1, Smith presents several principles of communication including reasons why communication may fail. As the goal of prophetic communication is to persuade and to transform the audience, Smith explains how prophetic communication creates the possibility of persuasion.

In chapter 2, Smith focuses on the social dimension of transformation and describes the sociological methodology which he applies to the study of the prophets: the "sociology of knowledge" developed by P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann with its concepts of objectification, internaliza-

tion, and externalization (*The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1966). Smith believes that the prophets introduced new ideas of the reality (process of externalization), which were "legitimated through persuasive communication so that the audience would internalize God's message and transform their lives" (44).

In the main part of his volume, Smith discusses each prophetic book, including Daniel, in terms of social setting, social interaction, and theological and social implications. Under social setting, Smith explores the historical context of the prophet, the social structure at that time, and the social location and role of the prophet himself, that is a personal profile of the prophet and the literary techniques he employed. The section on social interaction contains an outline and a description of the message of the prophetic book. The final part on the theological and social implications seeks to understand the importance of the prophetic message—regarding both content and communicative transmission—for today. The chapters on the prophetic books are organized according to the assumed chronological appearance of the prophets, i.e. from Amos to Malachi.

In the last chapter, Smith lists principles that characterize prophetic ministry. A glossary of terms from communication theory and sociology as well as a subject index and an author index are added.

Smith has to be congratulated for a freshly different introduction to the OT prophets. His combination of a sociological and communicative approach highlights the coherence and logical flow of the prophetic messages. Numerous footnotes (667!) show Smith's acquaintance with recent scholarship, though some of them are superfluous (93 note 14; 121 note 12; 125 note 24; etc.).

The identification of the prophets as preachers and of the prophetic messages as sermons helps to recognize the importance of this literature for today. Today's preachers will gain from Smith's observation of the dynamics of persuasion in the prophetic messages. Nevertheless, a note of caution must be added: A prophet is still different from a preacher, a divine message is not identical to a sermon, and the persuasive skills of the prophets were not as successful as Smith seems to imply (345).

It would have been desirable if Smith had given more attention to critical issues in the introductory questions to the prophets. Not even addressed are, for example, the date, authorship, and origin of the prophetic books, the difficulty in interpretation of the Immanuel sign and the servant songs in Isaiah, the relationship of the introductory Psalm of Nahum (1:2-8) to the rest of the book, the function of the confessions of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Priestly Code. When Smith mentions different scholarly opinions on a specific issue he presents his own view without giving adequate reasons for it (see, e.g., "The Book of . . ." section under each discussion of OT prophets). To Smith's credit it must be mentioned

that he states that his introduction "does not focus on the composition of prophetic books" (xi). However, one wonders whether a scholarly introduction can really afford to avoid such questions.

Some identifications of specific theological themes in each prophetic book are missed. These would help the reader to sense the special quality of each OT prophet and to recognize the multiple facets of this body of literature.

In the end, in spite of the sociological and communicative outlook at the OT prophets, not many new insights seem to emerge from this viewpoint.

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Spickard, Paul R., and Kevin M. Cragg. *God's Peoples: A Social History of Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994. 486 pp. \$24.99.

God's Peoples represents a new wave in the study of church history. In the preface the authors explain clearly their working objectives. Their goal was to answer several questions in the context of different eras and parts of the globe: First, How did Christians in this time and place experience God? How did they conceptualize Him? How did they experience Him in daily life? Second, How did Christians relate to one another? Third, How did Christians relate to the society around them? How did they fit into the social structure?

This is obviously a very ambitious program, but one which Spickard and Cragg have accomplished quite successfully. It is commendable that the authors sought the cooperation of five other church historians in the writing of the book. This provides more expertise, but also causes occasional repetitions.

To show how the global social-history perspective caused a shift in the treatment of church history, one can look at the table of contents. While seven chapters are devoted to the church from the apostolic period to the reformation, six chapters are written on the church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One can also observe that four chapters take the reader to areas that are often neglected in church history textbooks. Chapter 6, "Christians in the Non-Christian World to 1500," covers the Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Nestorian churches. Chapter 9 is devoted to European expansion in the Far East and the Americas. Chapter 13, "Christianity as a Worldwide Phenomenon," talks about missions but gives due attention to the place of native peoples in the spread of Christianity. Finally, chapter 17 introduces the students to native Christian movements in the Developing World. If we add to that the