

profit—and many will if not told not to—and that there is no division in the lessons themselves into beginning and advanced materials or discussions (xv). So, once the beginning students have studied these lessons, what is left for the intermediate students? They will not want to begin with lesson one of the same textbook—and workbook—and cover the same ground again. It seems Stevens has not given serious reflection to this matter.

Stevens is to be commended for producing a fine beginning Greek grammar, one which I heartily recommend to teachers and students of New Testament Greek.

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Thompson, Thomas L. *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources*. New York: E. J. Brill, 1994. xv + 482 pp. \$123.00.

The *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written & Archaeological Sources* by Thomas L. Thompson is a remaking of the history of Israel. If Thompson's syntheses gain the support of a majority of biblical scholars, this book and its associated suppositions will impact biblical studies much as Wellhausen's interpretation of the documentary hypothesis did a century ago.

The nine chapters of this book take the reader from the known (the documentary hypothesis) to the unknown (the new syntheses of Thompson). According to Thompson, a growing consensus that the Bible sheds no historical light on the period of the judges or the patriarchal period has caused him to conclude that scholars can no longer look to any part of the Bible for history. He sees this, likewise, as a major upset for the documentary hypothesis, since Thompson sees the historicity of the biblical text and the documentary hypothesis as linked together. Thompson suggests that scholars "need an independently derived history before we can adequately discern the nature and context of the ideologies that are implicit in the text" (126).

Thompson's independent history is radical and provocative. He sees the settlement patterns of the archaeological periods as largely the result of weather conditions. He doubts that any significant change of population ever occurred in Palestine after the Neolithic period (177). To him, the Philistines of the Bible stories never existed (177, 264, 270-272). The new settlements established during Iron I, etc., were not new populations but

new settlers from nearby regions expanding their settlements, attempting to survive drought conditions (236).

According to Thompson, Israel did not develop as a political power until the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. (306), while Judah and Jerusalem did not become significant until after the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians in the mid-seventh century B.C. (333, 410-411). The self-awareness of "Israelites" as an ethnic people was a theological innovation of Persian times rather than any genealogically-based group from centuries before (384). The biblical text was gathered from a variety of sources and Thompson doubts "whether they were intended to be read as an integrated whole" (358) or contained ideology (369-370). It was this very process of collecting the traditions that produced the Israelites (386). The biblical text was compiled "to give meaning to in [*sic*] the radically new worlds into which they [the inhabitants of Palestine] were thrown" (394, 418-419, 421-423).

Thompson himself recognizes that much of his book is "highly speculative" (171). His *a priori* assumption, that environmental calamity was the primary cause of all settlement patterns, forces him to accept uncritically the tenuous information available about weather trends millennia ago. If, in the future, a consensus should arise about ancient weather patterns different from the one Thompson has assumed, all of his reconstructions will be undermined.

Thompson gives the impression of being very uncomfortable with archaeology. He writes that pottery typology is "notoriously undependable" (183), yet all archaeological data depend on ceramics, even the data Thompson notes. In fact, his comments about the reliability of archaeology occur only when its data counter his conclusions.

Thompson's theories are philosophically driven rather than data driven. For example, he concludes that the "Israel" of the Merneptah stele is not the same as in later times or as referred to in the Bible (310-311). The only reason for such a deduction is that a more obvious conclusion runs counter to Thompson's theory.

The claim that the same ethnic population lived in Palestine from prehistoric times is highly unlikely. This supposition, however, forces Thompson to grudgingly allow new settlers in the region, while denying their impact. One need only consider that many population shifts have occurred in recent times solely due to greed and war. Why arbitrarily discount similar conditions as the primary force in one or several of Palestine's transitional periods?

Given the weighty matters discussed in Thompson's *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources*, the numerous typographical errors and the irritating inconsistencies of italicizing proper place-names may seem of little importance. Those,

however, who spend \$123.00 to purchase this book may feel their money deserved better editorial work, if not at least a spellchecker.

Whether Thompson's suppositions in the *Early History of the Israelite People* will gain significant adherents remains to be seen. The real question, however, is whether it takes us any closer to understanding the Bible or is just the most recent innovation.

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Trull, Joe E., and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-so-Good World*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993. 256 pp. Cloth, \$14.99.

Joe Trull and James Carter write out of a conviction that, given today's social context, there is a lack of guidance and instruction in ministerial ethics. "It seems enigmatic that in the one profession expected to model morality, very few codes of ethics are found" (183). To their credit, they have produced a noteworthy book that helps overcome that enigma.

Having defined gospel ministry as a "profession," they explore the dimensions of that profession with respect to ethics. How this is done is quite clearly revealed in such chapter headings as: "The Minister's Personal Life," "The Minister's Congregation," "The Minister's Colleagues," and "The Minister's Community."

Perhaps the most critical chapter concerning "ethics" is Chapter Two, "The Minister's Moral Choices: Endowed or Acquired?" While the Bible is the primary resource for ethical guidelines, it is not complete or absolute since we face many moral concerns that did not exist in Bible times. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is always critical in making moral choices. "Moral reflection and the ability to analyze situations are extremely important aids in decision making. . . . In sum, Christian ministers must use every means at their command in order to discover and to do the right thing" (45).

One of the questions that becomes central later in the book is raised in this chapter on moral choices: "What about a code of ethics for the church professional?" (56). The question leads to a consideration of "the value of rules and the dangers of prescriptive ethics" (ibid.). Like good evangelicals, the authors eschew legalism with its dogmas and creeds because any list of laws is never long enough. Their appeal is to principles rather than rules. To adequately use the Bible for moral decision-making, correct interpretation is most critical. Too often in life we are faced with the dilemma of having to break one rule in order to follow another.

Whether or not an action or behavior is right or wrong depends upon the consequences of that behavior. This principle for moral decision-