

Nardoni, Enrique. *Rise Up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World*, trans. Sean Charles Martin. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004. 343 pp. Paper, \$29.95.

The late Professor Enrique Nardoni presents us with a work that strives to be contextually biblical and historical. He works to counteract ideological readings of the biblical and ancient texts in which eisegesis at times is more prominent than exegesis. This comprehensive coverage and discussion of justice in the biblical world take us on a journey that is authentic and satisfying.

The topic of justice is covered in all of its dimensions: commutative, distributive, and legal—from early Mesopotamian texts to the Johannine writings of the first century C.E. *Rise Up, O Judge* begins by showing that exploitation and oppression existed in ancient Mesopotamia. The legal codes and decrees of mercy, however, demonstrate that the rulers desired to establish justice and equity. The same can be said of ancient Egyptian society and rule of law. Nardoni argues that both cultures influenced the thinking of Israel, and that their preoccupation with justice was analogous with the Hebrews' concerns.

This preoccupation with justice is highlighted with particularity in the Exodus event. This event, Nardoni writes, “is a paradigm of hope for all oppressed peoples, assuring them that they have not been created to be slaves but to be free in a society that should protect and practice justice” (62). Yet, the analogy is not exact. For, unlike the laws of the surrounding nations, biblical laws give preeminence to human life. For example, the life of the poor in the biblical documents is not less valuable than that of the rich.

Nardoni argues that the Prophetic texts present God's persistent hope for justice despite its elusive character. In varied ways, the prophets showed that God would intervene to change the present situation. Utilizing strong and intense language, they also challenged and encouraged all—both oppressors and oppressees—to participate in God's plan.

The Sages' and Apocalypticists' approach to justice is slightly different. Nardoni demonstrates that Wisdom literature is less acerbic and intense; yet, these writings are just as insistent on the fact that God's justice will vindicate the oppressed. In the same vein, the apocalyptic writers highlight the intervention of God to liberate his oppressed people. By the use of symbolic language, the writers encourage the oppressed community and hope is revived for the future.

It seems to me that Nardoni struggled as to how to best present Jesus and Justice. Ultimately he discussed the topic in five different chapters: the historical Jesus, the (odd) combining of Matthew and James, the perspective of Mark, Luke-Acts, and the Johannine discussion. These combinations and varied discussions are complex and worthy of more analysis than space allows here. Be that as it may, Nardoni does clearly demonstrate that Jesus' justice as presented in the Gospels is both liberative and transformative.

The book ends with treatments of the Pauline and Johannine writings. The former focuses on the condition of women, slaves, the poor, and household codes in the deutero-Pauline writings. The discussion of justice in the latter arises from the experience of persecution that the various communities faced, both internally and externally.

*Rise Up, O Judge* is an excellent and comprehensive introduction to the study of justice in the biblical world. The work is especially comprehensive in that Nardoni does not limit his discussion to passages that explicitly use the words for “justice.” For example, even in books such as the Gospel of Mark, which hardly ever uses the Greek word for “justice,” Nardoni demonstrates that the author of Mark portrays Jesus as one who shatters the barriers that promote discriminatory justice and opens the doors of salvific justice to all.

Audiences of many stripes can benefit from this work. Nardoni intentionally wrote it for the pew and the parish, not just for the gown and the lectern. Pastors, liturgists, and parishioners will find it as useful as will the academic guild. This is especially true because it goes beyond a merely historical and exegetical study, relating the texts to present social situations.

The reader should be aware of a few inadequacies in the book. Most glaring are a few typos, particularly on page 9. There is also what I consider a mistaken view of the social situation of the first century—especially in Palestine. Nardoni fails to accept, or at least recognize, the generally accepted view (at least by Second Testament social scientists and social historians) that there was no middle class in that world.

None of the above, however, should lessen the excellent contribution this work has made to the sociotheological discussion of the biblical world. The extensive bibliography and good overview of the issues and the debates that surround them make this book a must-have for all students of the Bible and its world.

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Noll, Mark A., and Carolyn Nystrom. *Is the Reformation Over?: An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. 272 pp. Hardcover, \$24.00.

Mark Noll, formerly McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College in Illinois, and now at the University of Notre Dame, is author of many books, including *Turning Points* and *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. With this book, he joins freelance writer Carolyn Nystrom to assemble an informative and instructive chronicle of two major worldwide faith communities and their relationship with one another. Their stated goal is for the book to be “an evangelical assessment of contemporary Roman Catholicism, with special attention given to the dramatic changes that have taken place since the Second Vatican Council” (13). The book primarily features the major shift that has unfolded in the United States within Catholicism; but developments in Canada, Latin America, Europe, and other countries are also included.

The title for chapter 1 immediately indicates that “Things Are Not the Way They Used to Be” between Catholics and Protestants. Chapter 2 sketches the long history of the major divide between the two that began in the sixteenth century, reminding the reader that this rupture continued unchanged for several hundred years. Chapter 3 recites the many varied and unexpected developments that have taken place in the last sixty years. The authors also offer suggestions as to why the long-standing rupture has modified so rapidly in recent decades.

Chapters 4–7 reference many dialogues and exchanges between Catholics and Protestants, along with the resultant convergences and disagreements emerging from these discussions since the Second Vatican Council. In the process, Noll and Nystrom furnish a wide spectrum of evangelical responses to the contemporary Catholic Church. For example, they discuss how the Anglican tradition leans toward believing that the “primacy of the bishop of Rome is not contrary to the New Testament and is part of God’s purpose regarding the Church’s unity and catholicity, while admitting that the New Testament texts offer no sufficient basis for this” (88).

The issue of sacraments is also addressed, including baptism: Catholics baptize infants by sprinkling; some Protestant traditions baptize believers by immersion. However, agreement has been fostered between the two traditions by recognizing that all Christians “baptize with water in the name of the Trinity by a duly authorized