

## Shorter Notices

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*The Future of Biblical Interpretation: Responsible Plurality in Biblical Hermeneutics*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter and Matthew R. Malcolm. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. Pp. 165. \$18.

These essays arose from a conference at the University of Nottingham honoring Anthony Thiselton. They present responsibility to the world in front of the text, in this case the world of the Reformed tradition. Authors include: Thiselton himself (“The Future of Biblical Interpretation and Responsible Plurality in Hermeneutics”); Porter (“Biblical Hermeneutics and *Theological* Responsibility”); Richard S. Briggs (“Biblical Hermeneutics and *Scriptural* Responsibility”); Malcolm (“Biblical Interpretation and *Kerygmatic* Responsibility”); James D. G. Dunn (“Biblical Hermeneutics and *Historical* Responsibility”); Robert C. Morgan (“Biblical Hermeneutics and *Critical* Responsibility”); Tom Greggs (“Biblical Hermeneutics and *Relational* Responsibility”); and R. Walter Moberly (“Biblical Hermeneutics and *Ecclesial* Responsibility”). The editors supply the introduction and conclusion.

The first four essays are a fairly tight unit, reacting against those who practice a “theological interpretation” without acknowledging the methodological problems of moving from ancient text to modern application. They represent, from the hermeneutical tradition of Heidegger to Habermas, a considerable advance in sophistication in the Reformed tradition. Dunn employs a hermeneutics more like that of E. D. Hirsch; in only two pages he deftly undermines major arguments of the Vatican documents, *Inter insigniores* (1976) and *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* (1994), on the non-ordainability of women. The last two essays are more theological, dealing with the influence of church traditions on the work of the biblical interpreter.

The strength of the collection is its searching dialogue with the Reformed tradition. There are no references to the perspectives of Catholic thinkers such as Sandra Schneiders or Bernard Lonergan, especially the latter’s hermeneutics as developed by Frederick Lawrence. The main problem with the collection is its reliance on hermeneutics as the total philosophy of *understanding*. These authors know that *Wirkungsgeschichte* and doctrines play a part in responsible interpretation, but they have no systematic framework in which hermeneutics interacts with these elements. Lonergan also locates hermeneutics in the realm of understanding, but he sites it in a more adequate philosophy of *knowing* in which judgment and decision play crucial

parts. Only an epistemology that locates valid interpretation in an act of judgment can secure the responsible plurality in biblical interpretation to which these authors aspire.

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*Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and the Old Testament Problem.* Edited by Heath A. Thomas, Jeremy Evans, and Paul Copan. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013. Pp. 352. \$20.60.

Apparently biblical and theological scholars have disregarded Qohelet's warning, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Eccl. 12:12, NRSV), because in recent years several new titles have appeared for us to consider. This volume is one of the best. As a collection of 15 articles or chapters by seasoned scholars from multiple disciplines (biblical, theological, ethical, and philosophical), it offers something for most readers.

The book begins with an intriguing examination of what many scholars simply assume—that Joshua was a primary resource for the Crusades. The conclusion is surprising: contra-Roland Bainton (*Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace*, 1960), it was the Maccabees and not Joshua that provided inspiration for the Crusaders. The remaining chapters examine the so-called "holy war" in the OT from diverse vantage points and with similar trenchant insights. Although somewhat beyond the confines of the book's title, chapters 5 and 6 offer a fruitful examination of divine warfare in Ephesians and Revelation. The articles, on the whole, are in dialogue with salient scholarship, and the footnotes will serve as fertile ground for additional research. A subject index would have made the book even more useful to that end.

Of particular interest is an effort by several of the authors to interpret *herem* hyperbolically. How can one credibly distinguish between hyperbolic passages and others devoid of hyperbolic nuances? Is there a "historical kernel" that one must somehow discern? While collections of articles by multiple authors help the reader quickly cover a lot of ground on a single topic, it is no surprise that categories of definition vary. For example, these same authors do not distinguish between general warfare, divine war, *herem*-war, and the various nuances of each throughout the OT.

These critiques aside, the book moves the discussion forward, but since unanswered questions remain, I suspect that, at least for the foreseeable future, we will continue to overlook Qohelet's admonition.

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