

Shorter Notices

Theological Studies
2014, Vol. 75(1) 209–220

© The Author(s) 2014

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0040563913519055

tsj.sagepub.com



Coping with Violence in the New Testament. Edited by Pieter G. R. de Villiers and Jan Willem van Henten. *Studies in Theology and Religion*. Boston: Brill, 2012. Pp. x + 305. \$135.

This volume contains 12 papers delivered at a 2008 conference on violence in the NT. The conference was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, and gathered scholars from the Netherlands, Belgium, and South Africa. Three essays address general topics such as the relationships between religion, the Bible, and violence (Jan Willem van Henten), the connections between violence in the NT and the Roman Empire (Jeremy Punt), and the hermeneutical perspectives on violence in the NT (de Villiers). The remaining essays examine specific sections of the NT: Romans and 1 Thessalonians (Andries van Aarde), Galatians (François Tolmie), the Pastoral Letters (Rob van Houwelingen), Mark and the *Gospel of Thomas* (Ernest van Eck), the *pericope adulterae* (Wim Weren), and John in general (Jan van der Watt and Jacobus Kok). Three contributions explore Revelation: de Villiers on Rev 18, Tobias Nicklas on Rev 19, and Paul B. Decock on the whole book.

This collection is to be commended for several reasons. First, almost all the essays exhibit much methodological sophistication and display extensive knowledge of theories on violence and of previous works that address violence in the NT. Most essays aptly summarize and critically engage such works. Second, several essays bring their reflection on biblical texts to bear on the context of violence in contemporary societies, especially South Africa, which one essay describes as one of the most unsafe countries in the world (151). Finally, most of the essays thoroughly identify and describe the instances, contexts, and functions of violent language in the NT.

Jean-François Racine
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

Ephrem, a “Jewish” Sage: A Comparison of the Exegetical Writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian and Jewish Traditions. By Elena Narinskaya. Turnhout: Brepols, 2010. Pp. xix + 357. \$102.

The book sets out to defend Ephrem against the charge of “anti-Judaism.” Narinskaya undertakes this by comparing Ephrem’s exegetical and hermeneutical strategies to those

found in rabbinic writings. On the basis of these parallels, she concludes that Ephrem's use of rabbinic methods shows he was not, in her words, "anti-Judaic." The conclusion is based on the fallacy that a Christian author whose understanding of Scripture has features in common with Jewish exegesis cannot be considered anti-Judaic.

N. cites Ephrem's wording of Peshitta Exodus 19:5–6 to show his positive use of Jewish Scripture. The conclusion rests on the assumption that the text of the Peshitta was fixed by the fourth century. N. then argues that a comparison of the treatment of the same text by Ephrem and Theodoret demonstrates Ephrem's reliance on Jewish tradition and Theodoret's indifference to it. Basing conclusions on texts placed side by side without the benefit of accompanying argument or explanation is a major methodological weakness throughout this text.

Better familiarity with current scholarship might have been helpful to N.'s purpose. For example, Yifat Monnickendam has shown a level of Jewish influence on Ephrem's thought that suggests sustained dialogue with rabbinic tradition, and Sidney Griffith has argued that Ephrem saw himself in continuity with Scripture's prophetic rebuke of Israel.

Jews and Christians in Mesopotamia shared a culture, language, and ethnicity that linked them long after they parted ways in the Greek-speaking West. Despite (or because of) this shared past, deep antagonisms persisted between two communities who were simultaneously brothers, neighbors, and bitter rivals. It was inevitable that contentiousness would veer into excess, and Ephrem contributed to the acrimony. However, the very serious allegation of anti-Jewishness requires a more comprehensive and nuanced defense than it receives here.

Joseph P. Amar
University of Notre Dame

Night Conversations with Cardinal Martini: The Relevance of the Church for Tomorrow.
By Carlo M. Martini and Georg Sporschill. New York: Paulist, 2012. Pp. viii + 126.
\$15.95.

This little book is important for several reasons. The first is that, in the Catholic Church of the post-Vatican II period, Martini (1927–2012) showed that one could uncompromisingly be a Vatican II bishop: a person who believed in the centrality of the Word of God in theological reflection; who pastorally approached contemporary issues touching Catholicism in a global and pluralistic world; and who, at the risk of becoming a persona non grata in the Roman Curia, engaged courageously with the Church as an institution and as an organization. In holding these positions, M. was probably the most representative bishop of a Vatican II church in Europe, similar to Charles Borromeo (one of M.'s predecessors as archbishop of Milan) relative to the Council of Trent. The second reason is that for some people M. had become the antimodel, the alternative to the theological culture and the doctrinal policies embodied by Pope John Paul II and Joseph Ratzinger, later Benedict XVI.