

informed exegesis cannot completely explain the problems away. In such instances, R. emphasizes the ultimate incomprehensibility of the divine and warns against holding God to any human standard of justice since “a ‘politically correct’ God risks becoming . . . an idol who does nothing but legitimize merely human aspirations” (57). R.’s repeated appeal to divine incomprehensibility, however, exposes a contradiction in his work that he never addresses: if God’s justice cannot be evaluated in light of human reason and ethics, what is the point of spending the majority of this book using contextually informed exegesis to make problematic biblical texts more agreeable to modern readers? Why go to great lengths to show that Genesis 22 presents “an incisive polemic against human sacrifice” (57) when one believes that God’s command for Abraham to slay Isaac cannot be criticized as evil by humans because of our limited knowledge?

Alongside this question, another critique deserves mention. R. occasionally will choose a less offensive biblical text to exemplify a particular troubling issue when other texts that present the issue in a more disturbing fashion are available. For instance, in his discussion of divinely mandated ethnic cleansing in the OT, R. presents as his example Deuteronomy 7:1–6—a passage that, unlike other texts describing the ban (*herem*) such as Deuteronomy 20:16–18 or 1 Samuel 15:1–2, does not explicitly mention the abhorrent command to slaughter children and animals. Likewise, R.’s discussion of divine violence is curiously centered on the Cain and Abel story, where God is only indirectly implicated for violent acts. A much more appropriate text for the discussion of divine violence is found in the very next narrative block of Genesis: the flood story of Genesis 6–9, in which God repays human sin with a violence that nearly destroys all life on earth. It seems that Genesis 4 is chosen because R. can commend God’s actions in forgiving Cain’s crime and can therefore show that God wishes to limit violent retribution; whereas God’s actions in the flood story are not as amenable to a nonviolent reading. Avoiding the more difficult cases in favor of those in which God can be more easily exonerated weakens the force of R.’s argument.

Despite these complaints, R. has presented a lucid and accessible text that serves as a good introduction to the wide range of topics in the discussion of the troubling aspects of the OT’s portrayal of God. It is well-suited to an undergraduate classroom or to the interested layperson.

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The Oral Gospel Tradition. By James D. G. Dunn. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. x + 390. \$45.

This book gathers 15 essays by Dunn that have appeared as articles in journals or as chapters in edited collections. Twelve were originally published in 2003 or later; two come from 1991 and 1992, respectively. One from 1977–1978 is still well worth reprinting; it refuted definitively the thesis (of Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann, among others) that in the earliest days of Christianity many prophetic

utterances moved easily into the Jesus tradition and were grouped with sayings of the earthly Jesus.

D. focuses on the 30 years in which the Jesus tradition was circulated and used in a predominantly oral fashion before it was transcribed and became the written texts of the Gospels: first Mark, then Matthew and Luke, and finally John. D. is concerned to correct a literary mindset or “paradigm” that, for instance, understands Matthew to have simply copied and edited a written form of the tradition—in particular, Mark and Q (122–23, 211, 213, 274–77). This paradigm of literary dependence and redaction cannot deal plausibly, for example, with the 22 doublets (17 of them in the sayings tradition) found in Matthew. The doublet tradition is testimony to a (predominantly oral) tradition that was “the *same* in subject and emphasis even when *different* in wording and detail” (135, *emphases original*).

From the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, the oral tradition involved several traditions. There was no such thing as the “single original form” of Jesus’ sayings (56–57, 77). Likewise, while we can speak of “an originating event,” we “should certainly hesitate before speaking of an originating tradition of the event” (56). From the outset, the disciples who heard the sayings of Jesus and witnessed his actions told and retold in somewhat differing words what they had experienced (127). Very likely Jesus repeated at least some of his teaching and did so in somewhat different words (217, 237–38). D. justifiably concludes, “The presupposition that there was a single original version of most of the Jesus tradition, especially the sayings tradition, is *a priori* dubious and undermined by the doublet tradition in particular” (136; see 254, 281).

In expounding the predominantly oral nature of the Jesus tradition, D. envisages his craft sailing between the Scylla of rigid repetition and the Charybdis of freewheeling invention: “A theory of parrot-like memorization will not do, given the variations and diversity of the tradition. A theory of freely creative memory will not do either, given the coherency and consistency of the tradition and the coherency and consistency of the impression (of Jesus) which the tradition still conveys” (8). D. expounds a model midway between Bultmann’s model of “informal, uncontrolled tradition” and Birger Gerhardsson’s “formal, controlled tradition” (205; see 216).

D. likewise steers a course between interpreting John’s Gospel as “mere” theology and exaggerating its historical witness (138–95). He recognizes “the beloved disciple” as “source and validator” of certain traditions (145). This brings us to the role of “eyewitnesses” in transmitting and monitoring the Jesus tradition and the recent work by Richard Bauckham. While maintaining that the tradition history is more complex than “simply the recollections of three or four individuals” (127 n. 22)—an unfair reduction of the eyewitnesses envisaged by Bauckham—D. speaks of “the community” monitoring the Jesus tradition (74). But in a dialogue with Bauckham (222–29), D. allows that he has not given adequate prominence to “the role of the first disciples and apostles.” “The early churches would have wanted to hear first-hand accounts of Jesus from those who had been with him during his mission.” D. is “less sure that they were able to exercise a very extensive monitoring role (‘controlled tradition’) as the new movement spread more widely” (223). So some eyewitness testimony takes its place

alongside the oral transmission of the Jesus tradition (208–10) and should not be implausibly discounted (224 n. 52).

Eleven of the book's 15 chapters appear as essays after the publication of D.'s *Christianity in the Making*, volume 1, *Jesus Remembered* (2003). These essays defend and further explain what D. had already published in that magisterial book; chapters 8 to 10 in particular comment on it.

Chapter 11 examines the work of Kenneth Bailey, who back in the 1970s first stirred D.'s interest in the importance of oral tradition (248–64). While insisting that memory in modern cultures operates differently from the ways it did in ancient, largely preliterate, societies, D. devotes chapter 10 to recent memory studies. He and other colleagues in biblical studies reveal a deficit in contemporary theology, which has almost universally failed to seek help (e.g., on the nature and function of tradition) from memory studies in anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology.

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La victoria sobre el poder de la muerte: Ensayo semántico y narrativo del texto griego de Marcos 9:30–32. By Dempsey J. Rosales Acosta. Sevilla: Circulo Rojo, 2012. Pp. 218. \$22.36.

Rosales Acosta offers a narrative analysis of the second of the so-called Passion predictions in the Gospel of Mark (9:30–32). One of the problems with most studies and translations of the text is their emphasis on the Passion (reflected in the heading “Passion Prediction” common to many Bible versions). These accounts fail to recognize the importance of the resurrection as part of the prediction. To redress this imbalance, R. proposes the kerygmatic epigraph “victory over the power of death” as a more appropriate heading. Additionally, many approaches lump Mark 9:30–32 with the other two Passion predictions, treating it summarily as the basis of the other two. The study investigates the passage on its own terms.

Chapters 1 and 2 offer a skillful analysis of the Greek text, establishing the boundaries of the passage and discussing textual variants. Next, R. examines the text's syntactical structure. The chiasmic structure of the passage focuses the reader's attention on Jesus' teaching, while the grammar of the prediction puts the emphasis on the resurrection. Chapter 4 notes some of the uniquely Markan features of this passage vis-à-vis Matthew and Luke: Mark emphasizes the journey to Jerusalem; his double reference to Jesus' death highlights his suffering at the hands of men, though the resurrection has the last word; only Mark describes this prediction as an instance of Jesus' teaching, emphasizing that it is bound up with his destiny. This chapter exemplifies the usefulness of synoptic comparison for narrative analysis (as opposed to questions of source criticism).

The exegetical commentary (chaps. 5–7) offers a number of worthwhile observations. A. notes that, whereas earlier in the Gospel Galilee functions as the place of action