

dominant economic model and proposes an alternative, the third provides instructions for training oneself in wisdom, and the last points to the location of the interrupters that could spur change in the current political and economic systems.

This is not necessarily an easy book to read. V.'s prose is not always straightforward and can be convoluted. For instance, when explaining "alternate subjectivity" in the third essay, his multiple explanations about the meaning of the phrase are unclear until he makes an analogy with Hegel's master-slave dialectic (110). Notwithstanding this minor problem, the book deserves to become known, read, and discussed. It could be a great resource in theology courses on social justice issues.

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A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative. By Cornelis Bennema. Foreword by R. Alan Culpepper. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. Pp. xviii + 222. \$39.

In this volume, Bennema continues the study of characterization initiated in his 2009 book, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*, but now he also focuses on the Gospel of Mark and the Acts of the Apostles. B. aims at presenting a comprehensive theory of characterization that is applicable to all NT narratives. To accomplish this, he employs the dominant paradigm of character reconstruction in the NT that views the characters as modeled in the same way as those of ancient Greek literature (chap. 1). Characters are mostly seen as ethical types subservient to the plot and therefore do not develop in contrast to the characters found in the Hebrew Bible and in modern literature who exhibit a capacity to change. Still, according to the dominant paradigm, modern literary methods are deemed useful for studying NT characters.

In chapter 2, B. argues that this paradigm is flawed. He considers examples of ancient writers such as Aeschylus and Sophocles who portray characters that evolve. B. maintains that modern literary methods are useful for studying ancient characters, assuming that interpreters are knowledgeable of the first-century world and can accordingly locate the characters in their sociohistorical context.

Chapter 3 exposes B.'s model for character reconstruction. It consists of the following: (1) studying a character in its literary and sociohistorical contexts; (2) analyzing and classifying a character according to complexity, development, and inner life, criteria borrowed from Yosef Ewen; and (3) evaluating a character in relation to the narrative point of view and plot with an eye to its contemporary significance. For such a task, which he calls a historical-narrative reading, B. assumes his reader to have a good, but not exhaustive, knowledge of the first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman world in which the NT documents were produced.

Chapter 4 applies the method to Peter, Jesus' mother, the woman with hemorrhages, and Bartimaeus in Mark; to Peter, Jesus' mother, Nicodemus, and Pilate in John; and to Pilate, Barnabas, and Lydia in Acts. This allows B. to compare the portrayals of Peter, Jesus' mother, and Pilate in two documents.

I perceive two advantages to B.'s method: (1) it allows for a methodical comparison of all characters on the same terms, and (2) it evaluates the characters' degree of complexity (none, little, some, much) rather than using limited binary categories such as round/flat. Accordingly, a character is labeled as an agent, a type, a character with personality, or a person. Yet, I usually found simplistic and moralizing the final step of the method, which describes the significance of the character and is meant to achieve a Gadamerian fusion of the historical context with the contemporary world of the reader. For instance, Jesus' mother in Mark would represent "those who, based on certain privileges, assume they are insiders and have access to Jesus (e.g., those who are born in a Christian family) but who are actually outsiders because they misunderstand Jesus and presume they can control him" (122). I am also unsure of the desirability of including a historical element in the narrative approach, because literary approaches help counterbalance historical approaches. Reintroducing historical concerns into narrative criticism jeopardizes the unique perspective it provides when interpreting narrative sections of the NT. Interestingly, when addressing point of view, B. seems to ignore Alain Rabatel's recent work on this topic and relies more on the work of Boris Uspensky, published in the early 1970s. Similarly, when dealing with the portrayal of Peter in Acts, B. relies heavily on Carsten Peter Thiede's 1986 monograph on Simon Peter, mostly written from a historical perspective, and shows no acquaintance with Yvan Mathieu's 2004 massive monograph on Simon Peter in Luke–Acts, written from a narrative perspective. Despite these few shortcomings, B. has provided interpreters with a splendid tool for studying characters in NT narratives.

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Christ Absent and Present: A Study in Pauline Christology. By Peter Orr.

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2/354. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014. Pp. x + 259. €79.

Orr's revised dissertation analyzes the tension in Paul's writings between the absence and presence of Christ, an absence and presence that are experienced simultaneously. This tension is expressed, for example, in Romans 8. On the one hand, Paul states that Christ is "in" the believer (8:10); on the other hand, he declares that Christ is at the right hand of God (8:34). O.'s basic assertion is that by appreciating how Paul conceives the "absence" of Christ—an absence that "is explained by his continuing humanity in which he possesses a distinct and distinguishable resurrection body" (3)—we gain greater precision in understanding what the apostle means when he speaks of Christ's "presence." In short, that presence is mediated presence, whether by Paul, the gospel, the church, or, most especially, the Spirit.

After setting forth his thesis (chap. 1), O. offers in chapter 2 a helpful comparison of the works of Albert Schweitzer and Ernst Käsemann. The purpose of the comparison is to raise essential issues and show different ways that commentators understand