

Shorter Notices

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The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture. By the Pontifical Biblical Commission. Translated from Italian by Thomas Esposito, OCist. and Stephen Gregg, OCist.; foreword by Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014. Pp. xxii + 181. \$19.95.

Theology, History and Biblical Interpretation: Modern Readings. Edited by Darren Sarisky. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. Pp. viii + 490. \$48.95.

The latest document to come from the Pontifical Biblical Commission first sets itself to illustrate how the authors of the Old and New Testament testified to the divine origin of their texts. Recognizing different ways the inspired Scriptures originated from God, the document concentrates on divine revelation becoming “a written text” and on the books of the Bible functioning as “a privileged vehicle of God’s revelation” (47, 60). The document has to work hard to press into this scheme human matters that are less closely connected with the divine self-revelation, such as the love between a young woman and a shepherd vividly and even erotically celebrated in the Song of Songs (86–88). When the authors reach some classical challenges for biblical interpretation, they introduce the question of which passages should be “considered perennially valid” and which “relative” or “linked to a culture, a civilization, or even the mentality of a specific period of time.” They add, “the status of women in the Pauline epistles raises this type of question” (150). The document then discusses what these epistles say about the submission of women to their husbands, the silence of women in ecclesial gatherings, and the role of women in the assembly (153–54). Such examples should be understood not as “a word that comes from God” or a revelation that becomes “a written text,” but rather as items recorded under the impulse of divine inspiration coming from human beings and the culture of their world.

A second part of the document spells out the testimony to the truth of the biblical writings, and ends by stressing the need for a canonical approach. Part three takes up historical problems (the crossing of the Red Sea), as well ethical and social challenges (the law of extermination and prayers calling for vengeance). A helpful conclusion summarizes such important themes as the multiform and canonical nature of biblical truth.

After an intelligent and well-researched introduction, Sarisky presents lengthy passages from 20 authors who have contributed notably to interpreting the Bible. He begins with Benedict de Spinoza and ends with John Webster, and includes landmark

contributions from Strauss, Kierkegaard, Troeltsch, Barth, Bultmann, Pope Pius XII (*Divino afflante spiritu*), Ebeling, de Lubac, Childs, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Paul Ricoeur. Given Schleiermacher's role in the rise of modern hermeneutics (heavily represented in the volume), I have to admit puzzling over his omission; he does not even appear in the index.

The volume is enriched by concise introductions to each author and by an index of names and subjects. It would serve as a valuable text for seminars involving staff and advanced students. With neither "inspiration" nor "truth" finding a place in the index, its concerns diverge strikingly from those of the biblical commission.

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First, Second, and Third John. By George L. Parsenius. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. Pp. xv + 190. \$30.

This volume is a recent addition to the Paideia commentary series which "sets out to comment on the final form of the New Testament text in a way that pays due attention both to the cultural, literary, and theological settings in which the text took form and to the interests of . . . contemporary readers" (ix). As such, Parsenius's contribution seeks to bridge that divide for this segment of the Johannine literature. He devotes 30 pages to introductory material, including the letters' relationship to the Fourth Gospel, their chronology, rhetorical strategies, setting, purpose, authorship, and relationship to other literature of the time. In the bulk of the volume he gives detailed exegeses, with the final pages providing indexes and bibliography. In addition, charts and tables of information throughout present quick views and comparisons.

In keeping with the divide-bridging purpose of the series, P. opens by introducing the letter as "second self" that makes "the absent person present," although these particular letters "cloak their author" and recipients "in anonymity" even as they project these voices across the centuries (3). Arguing that the letters were meant to be preserved and read in close proximity to the Gospel, he works from the position that they were written at a later period, produced from the same source that chose (significantly) to remain anonymous and wrote late in the first century, likely in or near Ephesus. The exegesis proceeds from these starting points. First John is paraenetic literature structured broadly in four parts following a prologue (1:1–4). Declarations on light and darkness (1:5–2:11) are followed by exhortations on the children of God (2:12–3:10) and love for God and one another (3:11–4:21), and culminate in testimony and witness (5:1–21). Second and Third John are properly speaking "letters" with openings, bodies, and farewells.

P. offers a solid commentary written in clear, insightful prose on a small but difficult body of literature that will be a welcome addition to any scholarly library and find use in the advanced undergraduate or early graduate classroom.

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