

BOOK REVIEWS



Janzen, Waldemar. *Exodus*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Waterloo, Ontario and Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2000.

Waldemar Janzen's commentary on Exodus in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series offers its readers a rewarding and theologically rich interpretation of the biblical book, which Janzen aptly describes as the "heart of the Old Testament." Janzen is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and German at Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

Janzen labels his own approach as "canonical-literary." By this, Janzen means that he consciously focuses on the interpretation of the final form of Exodus within the overall context of the Christian Bible. He draws heavily on recent narrative approaches to the text. The emphasis is on a close reading of Exodus along with reflection on the implications of its message for today. Janzen is familiar with current scholarship, and he effectively incorporates it into his commentary as issues arise from his reading of Exodus. He keeps the focus on the exposition of the text by using a system of cross-references, which guides the reader to essays that supplement the commentary proper. In these essays, Janzen includes short discussions of key themes and critical issues related to the study of Exodus. Topics include: Beauty; Consecration; Covenant; Israel in Egypt; Moses; Name, Glory, Face/Presence, Hand/Arm; Narrative Technique; Pharaoh's Hardening of Heart; Plagues, Signs and Wonders; Promised Land; Revelation and Mission; The Route of the Exodus; Source Theory; and Yahweh War.

Janzen divides the book into two main units: Exodus 1:1-7:7 Anticipation: Focus on Moses and Exodus 7:8-40:38 Realization: Focus on Israel. Each main unit has several sub-units within it. The overall structure of Exodus is important to Janzen, and one of this commentary's strengths is its ability to deal with the discrete voices of the individual passages without losing sight of their function within the wider narrative.

In his analysis of each sub-unit, Janzen begins with a Preview that describes the overall movement of the section. Explanatory notes provide the reader with a discussion of individual pericopes. Good theological exegesis, however, does not end with the treatment of isolated passages. In sections labeled "The Text in Biblical Context" and "The Text in the Life of the Church," Janzen puts the discrete message of Exodus into conversation with related texts of the Old and New Testaments and then offers suggestions on how Exodus addresses modern day believers.

This commentary has much in its favor. First, Janzen summarizes Exodus as a message about a change of masters that focuses on answering a key question: "Whom shall Israel legitimately serve?" This permits Janzen to emphasize rightly that Exodus is more about the salvation and subsequent commissioning of a people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation than it is a story of the liberation of a people for the purpose of political freedom. Such an approach also places the legal section (Exodus 19-40) in the context of grace rather than as its antithesis.

Second, in contrast to many treatments of Exodus, Janzen provides full coverage of the legal material (Exodus 19-40). Apart from the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and the Golden Calf narrative (Exodus 32-34), modern readers often struggle to make sense of the ancient legal practices and the repetitious nature of these chapters. This reader found Janzen's exposition to be refreshing and helpful. He carefully and clearly explains each law within its Near Eastern, Pentateuchal, and canonical contexts. He also presents the instructions for the Tabernacle and related cultic paraphernalia as a vision for worship by a redeemed people that effectively extends Sinai beyond its geographical limits and provides for God's dynamic presence with his people.

Third, Janzen consistently offers a clear, direct treatment of the text. Janzen's critical judgment is well balanced and articulate. The reader comes away from each pericope with a coherent understanding of what the passage means in terms of Exodus as a whole, the canon, and for today's world. Janzen achieves this by addressing the types of questions that readers ask. For example, he treats the issue of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart from a number of angles without reducing it merely to another debate over predestination and free will. As part of his exposition of the ten plagues, he addresses a question that arises even more frequently in our post-9/11 world: Does God still use plagues as judgment signs?

Last, Janzen gives serious consideration to the implications of the biblical message for contemporary Christians. Janzen writes explicitly for the Church. Thus, his exegesis is not merely descriptive, but explicitly prescriptive. This section flows naturally from the exegesis, and it provides the reader with a seasoned guide to possible ways for appropriating the message of Exodus.

This final strength is also one of the commentary's weaknesses. Janzen offers a variety of potential contemporary applications of Exodus. This ultimately limits the specificity of Janzen's comments so that his words often are more programmatic than detailed statements. For example, Janzen concludes that one of the lessons of chapters 32-34 is that idolatry often arises from trying to meet "religious needs" rather than proclaiming clearly God's Word. He suggests that this has implications both for those who tend toward a heavy experiential dimension in worship and spiritual life and for those who strive to make worship and church life relevant through contemporary music and mimicking cultural trends. Such broad statements need more description than Janzen is able to provide.

Additionally, I think that this particular volume overshoots its intended popular audience. This is a fine commentary, but it definitely assumes some exposure to the critical interpretation of Scripture.

Given its relatively short length (496 pp.), Janzen's *Exodus* is certainly not the final word on this key biblical book, but pastors and other serious students of the Bible seek-

ing a substantive, theologically sensitive treatment written by a careful exegete with a pastor's heart will find *Exodus* to be a welcome addition to their libraries.

BRIAN D. RUSSELL

Asbury Theological Seminary
Orlando, Florida

Leclerc, Diane. *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness in Historical Perspective*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2001.

This ambitious work originated as a Ph.D. dissertation at Drew University and appears here in a form that suggests little if any revision from its first incarnation. The author teaches historical theology at Northwest Nazarene University. This book was awarded the annual book prize given by the Wesleyan Theological Society, and appears in Scarecrow's series in Pietist and Wesleyan studies.

Authorial self-disclosure and self-definition is never to be ignored or overlooked. It is significant that Leclerc sees herself in a threefold light, as carrying on the Wesleyan theological tradition, as heir and perpetuator of the piety of the holiness movement, and as informed by feminism. Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray serve as Leclerc's feminist resources.

On the whole a fair balance is maintained among these three interpretive lenses and foci. The three cannot become a true trinity, because they do not cohere to that level of oneness, but remain a serviceable triad. The pietist angle is perhaps undersold, and at times one wonders if there are any centering definitions in play at all, because the three lenses of Wesleyanism, holiness, and feminism are polymorphous and ambiguous.

Naturally, one expects the Wesleyan and the holiness strands to have much to say to one another. But the feminist input is no mere afterthought. Without the feminist leavening, Leclerc would have no way to reach her conclusion, which is a commendation of Phoebe Palmer's view of sin as relational idolatry. Palmer thus serves as a kind of "triboro" bridge connecting Wesleyanism, holiness impulses, and feminism.

Because Leclerc is an historical theologian, there is much prelude before we come to Palmer. Leclerc appropriates insights from Augustine, Jerome, John Chrysostom, and of course Wesley. Leclerc is adept at mining from these resources such materials as will prove her overall thesis, which is that traditional theological approaches to sin alienate women and do no favors to men either.

The author's approach to Wesley borders on the novel, because most of her data are gleaned from his letters. Since this book aims to be a theological study, and since by all accounts Wesley's theology is chiefly to be found in his sermons, Leclerc's methodological innovation may raise some eyebrows. She does, however, cite some of Wesley's explanatory notes upon the New Testament.

In her historical analysis, Jerome and John Chrysostom, while by no means heroes, come off relatively better than does Augustine. Although Jerome and Chrysostom often denigrated women, the friendships they undertook with the female ascetics in their respective circles were nonetheless often "strongly reciprocal" (p. 76). Augustine's pattern

is the opposite. His dealings with women and theological assertions about them undercut and contradict his sometimes positive rhetoric.

As for Wesley, he was also at times a walking contradiction. Wesley wanted women to be women on his terms, not on theirs. Wesley carried on a long correspondence with Ann Bolton, and Leclerc evaluates many of Wesley's letters to Bolton as "grossly manipulative" (p. 65). Yet the women associated with Wesley came to occupy an "ironic 'liberating' space," (p. 76) as Wesley allowed them to preach and lead Methodist bands.

A doctoral dissertation is meant to stake out and defend new terrain. The author succeeds in doing so, and her effort translates fairly well to a book format. Leclerc negotiates a complicated path, allowing the historical and the theological to contemplate each other, to reach a simple conclusion. The doctrine of sin must be reconfigured in ways that will ultimately lead away from misogyny and toward a woman's full subjectivity, a notion she borrows and refines from Palmer, de Beauvoir, and Irigaray.

Because these ideas (or perhaps especially her centering plea for a more representative and holistic depiction of the doctrine of sin) are potent, it is hoped that *Singleness of Heart* attracts a wider readership than its presumed scholarly audience. Perhaps in a new and subsequent work Leclerc might consider presenting her thesis in a format and with a publisher that together would insure a wider hearing.

If she writes another book, Leclerc should address how the doctrine of sin leads to and interacts with the remainder of the complex of theology, something she largely ignores here. Feminists more sympathetic to the claims of Wesleyanism and holiness theology than de Beauvoir and Irigaray might also be recruited.

RODERICK T. LEUPP

Oklahoma Wesleyan University
Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

McDermott, John K. *Reading the Pentateuch: A Historical Introduction*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002.

Reading the Pentateuch: A Historical Introduction joins a burgeoning list of recent titles designed to introduce the Pentateuch to students of Scripture. It opens with two introductory chapters. "The Pentateuch and History" briefly narrates the content of each of the Pentateuch's five books, offers a brief discussion of the relationship between history and theology, and provides a summary of Israel's history from 1200-63 B.C.E. In the second chapter "How the Pentateuch Was Written," McDermott presents a concise sketch of the debate over the Pentateuch's composition. The remaining chapters offer direct study of the content of each book: Genesis 1-11, Genesis 12-50, Exodus 1:1-13:16, Exodus 13:17-40:38, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Helpful maps and charts are found throughout the text, and a few additional ones are collected in an appendix. The volume ends with a list of suggested readings that are organized around the individual chapters.

The principal focus of *Reading the Pentateuch* is an assessment of the Pentateuch's historical value. By historical value, McDermott means a text's demonstrable historicity or

otherwise its worth in terms of the light that it sheds on its time of composition. McDermott advocates a thoroughgoing historical-critical treatment of the text. Such an approach is marked by an "openness to new answers and an openness to any methodology that might help interpret the text" (6).

The strength of McDermott's work is the wealth of background information that he provides for most of the passages in the Pentateuch. The careful reader will learn much about the world that produced the Hebrew Scriptures. Explicit connections with Ancient Near Eastern parallel materials are explored. For example, he introduces the reader to the major Mesopotamian texts (Enuma Elish, Atahasis, and the Epic of Gilgamesh) during the discussion of the early chapters of Genesis. Major law codes are referenced to shed light on Israel's own statutes. Oftentimes, the background information is quite detailed for an introduction. For example, students are also introduced to the nomadic Shasu as possible forerunners to Israel.

McDermott provides particularly good coverage of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. On Leviticus, McDermott carefully explains concepts typically alien to the modern reader such as purity and holiness. He also includes a brief discussion of the role played by the interchange between law and narrative in the Pentateuch. The introduction to Deuteronomy does an excellent job in explaining Deuteronomy's relationship to Joshua through Second Kings and to the other Prophetic books.

A number of weaknesses, however, lessen the usefulness of the work as an introductory text. First, McDermott believes that the majority of the Pentateuch is exilic or later. This is an increasingly popular position in certain circles, but McDermott does not present much evidence in support of it other than asserting repeatedly that the theological message of a given text assumes a people in exile preparing for a return to its homeland. At best, McDermott demonstrates how the Pentateuch can be read against an exilic or post-exilic backdrop. He does not give fair weight to evidence that suggests that much of the Pentateuch derives from an earlier time.

Second, McDermott is repeatedly polemical against what he terms a "fundamentalist" reading in which all of the Bible is historical and is to be interpreted literally. This is something of a "straw man" since, as McDermott acknowledges, "no one, in fact, is a complete fundamentalist..." (7). Yet, to counter such a reading, McDermott makes reference to alleged contradictions in the Biblical text and the improbabilities of the Pentateuch's historicity throughout. On page one, McDermott asks, "If much of the Pentateuch turns out to be stories that do not record real events, does that mean that its theological message is also invalid?" McDermott does in fact conclude that much of the Pentateuch is fiction. There is nothing particularly novel about this conclusion in the milieu of modern scholarship, but McDermott does not answer his own question concerning the Pentateuch's enduring validity and leaves his neophyte reader puzzled.

Third, McDermott's handling of the source critical debate is confusing. In chapter two, he introduces his reader to the standard rubrics of J, E, D, and P according to Wellhausen. However, after a whirlwind tour of post-Wellhausen scholarship, he follows Van Seters and Blenkinsopp and opts for a DJP scheme in which J and P are exilic and post-exilic respectively. The beginning reader will certainly not understand the intricacies of this, but the real problem occurs in later chapters in which McDermott references source docu-

ments but it is not always clear regarding which paradigm McDermott is using.

Fourth, there are fundamental omissions in this book. The concept of covenant is not considered adequately as a means for dating the material nor for its function in the binding of the Pentateuch together through a chiasmic structure: A Noahic (Gen 6:18, 9:8-17), B Abrahamic (Gen 17:1-14, cf. Gen 15:1-21), C Sinai (Exod 19:1-Num 10:10, especially Exod 19:1-34:28), B' Covenant with Phinehas (Num 25:11-13), and A' Covenant in Moab (Deuteronomy). Also key theological texts such as Gen 12:1-2, 15:1-6, and Exod 34:6-7 receive no substantive treatment. A historical assessment of these might have enriched the presentation.

In the end, *Reading the Pentateuch* will not be a satisfying read for many. McDermott's failure to address adequately the abiding theological significance of the Pentateuch in light of the historical improbabilities and contradictions that he notes looms large. For example, on the tensions between Genesis 1 and 2, he writes, "Those who gathered the material into the Pentateuch chose to include both stories despite the different views of God and contradictions in some of the details. The theological message is that God is too big to be captured by one story. We know the truth of who God is only by seeing from multiple viewpoints" (22). Such aphorisms hardly capture the power and richness of the Pentateuchal drama whose recipients revered it not merely as a pious fiction but as Mosaic *Torah*. Students wishing to read the Pentateuch on its own terms as Scripture will want to look elsewhere.

RODERICK T. LEUPP
Oklahoma Wesleyan University
Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

Rabey, Steve. *In Search of Authentic Faith: How Emerging Generations Are Transforming the Church*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001.

For more than a decade philosophers, writers and marketers have pointed to sweeping shifts in ideology and culture that are producing generations of young who are spiritually hungry but disenchanted with conventional ways of being Christian. Paradoxical characterizations of these emerging generations, coupled with ever-increasing plurality within each generation often leave Christian leaders bewildered over how to respond. Some react despairing of the mass exodus of young from mainline churches pointing to rampant sexual experimentation, isolation and violence depicted in virtual reality, and antagonistic attitudes toward authority as indicative of a sad state of affairs. Others find contemporary culture reflecting a desperate cry for transcendence and intimacy indicative of a "kairos" moment for ministries unfettered by traditional trappings to seize the day.

Along with the cacophony of philosophical voices and cultural exegetes offering descriptive analysis of the cultural puzzle, Steve Rabey sounds a helpful and hopeful note to those ministering in such contexts. Rabey's project is to offer a "guided tour of the changing face of Protestant Christianity in America" (p. 2). His interest is to hear the "soul" of the emerging generation and survey key players who are forging an insightful

and impassioned response; harbingers perhaps of the church of the third millennium. Rabey's gift is his ability to pan the gold out of currents that many have found too treacherous in which to stand, and he does this in easy prose to help us know where to step to gain solid footing.

Part 1 of *In Search of Authentic Faith* offers a collage of anecdotes, representative quotes, and concise summative comparisons that gifts readers with an insightful sketch of post-modernism. Noting that it is largely capitalistic interests that have led marketers to define what constitutes a "generation" and to depict the primary characteristics of particular "generations," Rabey observes that many churches have followed this strategy of "marketing" toward a particular subculture. This phenomenon raises a critical question for leaders of ministry: Are generation-specific approaches indeed expanding the Kingdom of God or simply breaking it into pieces?

Part 2 identifies what Rabey regards as the core values of emerging generations (authenticity, community, religious experience, and pop-culture literacy) and explores how these values are shaping the ecclesiology and ministry designs of key leaders. Framing his exploration in this way allows him to move beyond the common descriptive analysis of Gen X or millennials to an engagement with issues relevant for ministry with these generations.

Consider for example, Rabey's observation that the brokenness and alienation of most postmoderns makes them hungry for community, but at the same time makes it difficult to create and even more difficult to sustain. On the one hand, postmoderns are eager to find social space in which to connect; on the other hand they resist infringement into their personal space. Further, noting how evangelicals have emphasized personal conversion to Christ and have celebrated a believer's immediate access to God independent of ecclesiastical authority, Rabey highlights the paradox of encouraging independent and personal experience while yet calling for meaningful community.

Concerning the core values of worship and religious experience, Rabey points out how Protestants have tended to overemphasize words, diminishing aspects of mystery, beauty and transcendence. Eager to move people toward spiritual experience, churches spend for musicians, technologically advanced sound, and recordings continuous with the music people most enjoy in their leisure. Although this has its merits, Rabey points out that with worship music available on CD and with concert audiences singing praise choruses, the line between church music and consumer entertainment becomes blurred.

Next, Rabey discusses the core value of pop-culture literacy that he views reshaping information processing. For potential strategic responses, Rabey advocates storytelling, evangelism as Socratic process, disciplined consumption of the media, and the necessity of living demonstrations of faith.

In Part 3, Rabey sorts ministry responses into five categories: underground efforts outside the walls of existing churches, specialized youth or campus ministry, targeted services or programs, church-within-a-church, and church planting. Focusing particularly on the last two approaches, he is particularly interested in exploring how the Christian life might be presented to non-believers within these varied responses and what profile of leadership might best be suited to lead such endeavors.

In Search of Authentic Faith meets the expectations one might bring to a book of this kind. Rabey researches and writes as a journalist, gleaming who and what is important

from a vast array of material and voices. There is no real scientific method articulated by which he determines these to be the core values of emerging leaders. Nor does he offer any criteria by which he chooses what constitutes an emerging, postmodern leader. As such it is difficult to know how representative Rabey is in his assessment. Are the core values Rabey identifies as central to transforming the church really reflective of the comprehensive concerns of all those in these emerging generations, both boomers and busters? Do these core values reflect the concerns or provide direction for ethnic minority leaders, ministers of small or rural congregations, or those with limited resources? If these core values are reflective of both boomers and busters, it still remains important to remember that they are advocated as specific to a particular generation.

Nevertheless, assessing the book on a more personal level, I found myself commending the trustworthiness of Rabey's journalistic eye and appreciating this topographical map of the ecclesiastical landscape. Despite sparing his readers a philosophical discussion of postmodernity, I felt upon finishing the book that Rabey offered me new understandings of its impact and implications. While reading I noted dozens of websites to visit, a few movies to watch, colleagues in ministry who should be encouraged to read this book, and a new contact to make. And although feeling occasionally unnerved by the unfamiliar methods employed by some of the leaders ministering to these generations, Rabey's presentation left me hopeful and eager to embrace these new experiments in ministry.

CHRIS KIESLING
Asbury Theological Seminary
Wilmore, Kentucky