

Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987. 219 pp. \$17.95.

In the fourth of his "toward" volumes (OT theology, 1978; OT exegesis, 1981; OT ethics, 1983), Walter Kaiser tackles the significance of the OT for the Christian church. The solution to this issue, Kaiser rightly points out, affects all other areas of theology. The aim of the volume is to restore the OT to its proper place in the church and to help Christians find meaning, relevance, and direction from it.

The book is described as part of an emerging genre on the OT. However, although Kaiser tells his readers what it is not, what works it is similar to, and what issues he wishes to address, he never quite gets around to naming the genre. His concerns are historical, hermeneutical, and theological. Though academic and theoretical, the book attempts to be practical. The thesis is that the OT is relevant to today's issues, but only if Christians are aware of its contents. Inherited prejudice against the OT, and especially the law of God, must be removed and a balanced spiritual diet of both OT and NT maintained.

According to Kaiser, "The Christian Problem" is the OT, with two issues to be faced: (1) Is the OT authoritative for the Christian? and (2) How shall that authority be recognized? Concomitant with the latter is the problem of deciding the contents of that authority for today. Trying to deal with these issues, Kaiser addresses a series of questions from the OT. These are placed under the more general section topics of canon, criticism, OT theology, Christology, the plan of salvation, ethics, the OT as an object of proclamation, and the OT as scripture.

The specific questions discussed under each of the above topics are too numerous to be cited in full, so only a few will be discussed here. The Jamnia hypothesis is addressed within the section on the canon, but correctly viewed as not settling the issue. Instead, a case is presented for a "progressive formation and canonization" on the basis of the internal witness of the OT books themselves. As for criticism, Kaiser maintains that faith must be founded on fact, truth, and event. Adequate evidence (rational and historical) must exist to indicate that central events actually occurred. Scripture was meant to be read and understood, and methods of criticism used carefully, without acceptance of the philosophical presuppositions of Troeltsch, are acceptable.

In addition to the above, there are useful discussions on the amount of continuity and discontinuity between the OT and the NT, the personal and objective effectiveness of the OT sacrifices, the OT believers' experience of the Holy Spirit, the OT believers' hope of life beyond the grave, and methods for deriving principles from the specific commands of the law. Kaiser's solutions to these and other pertinent questions deserve careful consideration, even if one does not agree with all of his conclusions.

There are, however, at least three problem areas that need comment: (1) Kaiser links the land aspect of the covenant to Rom 11:26, 27 and concludes that the Jewish nation ("all Israel") will be restored to its land again. M. Kline ("Review of McComiskey," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30 [1987]: 77-80) calls this position "halfway dispensationalism." For a more cogent approach to this problem, cf. C. Wright, *An Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today* (Downers Grove, IL, 1983), pp. 88-102. On the various views concerning Israel in Rom 11, cf. C. M. Horne, "The Meaning of the Phrase 'And All Israel Will be Saved' (Rom 11:26)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21 (1978): 329-334. (2) Regarding the covenant, Kaiser appeals to T. McComiskey's *The Covenants of Promise* to divide Gen 17 into two separate covenants. This obscures the unity of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Kline). (3) In sections dealing with the Messiah, Kaiser seems to attribute more exact knowledge to the OT prophets concerning final fulfillment than they probably had.

These problems aside, Kaiser has offered a very stimulating volume, one that deserves a large readership, both scholarly and lay alike.

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Mack, Burton L. *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988. xii + 432 pp. \$29.95.

Burton Mack's *A Myth of Innocence* is intended to set a new trend within NT scholarship. In his study of the Gospel of Mark as a source for the understanding of early Christianity, he reads Mark not as a reflection of the life situation of Jesus but solely as a reflection of situations the community of Mark faced and experienced. Thus Mack speaks rather deprecatingly of previous attempts to understand the "novelty" of Christianity as being due to the appearance of Jesus. For Mack, the information needed for such an approach is unattainable to the historian because it lies "on the other side of limits set by the nature of the texts at the scholar's disposal" (p. 3).

Mack's introductory chapter sets forth his goal and purpose. He briefly rehearses the attempts of NT scholarship to account for the origins of Christianity, in terms of both the quest for the historical Jesus and the quest for the earliest Christology. Mack is dismayed by the seeming impossibility of achieving any sort of consensus. That problem, coupled with the "lateness" of the texts at hand (a point he greatly overemphasizes), leads Mack to the conclusions that an understanding of the life situation of Jesus is unattainable and that the texts of early Christianity, with Mark as the focus of his study, have to be understood solely on the basis of the