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Review: Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative

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absence of the proper end of human community (which is participation in the Trinitarian communion). And finally, 'Thinking Love' probes the nature of love as we can learn it from the interactions of the Father, Son and Spirit (the Spirit thus being seen as the agent of all true love).

Many of Jenson's observations flow from theological assumptions that Jenson does not put on display here and with which readers are sure to disagree at some point. However, in spite of such theological differences, I would recommend this book as an invigorating and deeply challenging read.

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ENCOUNTERING THE DIVINE: THEOPHANY IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE
George W. Savran
London: Continuum, 2005, viii + 280 pages, hb., £75,
ISBN: 0-567-04391-6

George Savran, professor of Bible at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has a delightful volume on theophany, God's appearances to man. Five chapters emphasize the literary aspects of the text-type schema of theophany narratives, noting the preparations for, the visual aspects of, the human responses to, and the transformation of the human recipient of God's appearances. Three final chapters address literary motifs such as the potentially lethal nature of divine encounters, intertextual comparisons of various theophanies, and a tracing of theophany in Daniel and post-biblical

apocalyptic literature. The literary analysis is most enlightening, as when theophanies to Moses and Elijah are compared at length (207–229). Savran writes clearly and logically, sharing helpful, fascinating insights into plot and character development.

The writing is up-to-date and aware of most relevant literature. Though written in English, it is intended for Hebrew scholars and students interested in scene development and narrator technique. The Hebrew text and individual Hebrew words are freely used and discussed. With 1010 footnotes, each page averages over four. The bibliography lists about 500 recent sources. Indices of Hebrew Bible references, 'other ancient references', and authors cited follows.

Savran does not distinguish between conscious reality and theophanic dreams and visions. Thus, he includes Jacob's dream (Gen. 28), Isaiah's and Ezekiel's visions, and God's appearances to conscious individuals such as Hagar, Moses, Balaam, Gideon, and Joshua as part of the same text-type schema. The comparisons of Genesis 28 and 32, Jacob's leaving and return, are interesting, but why then does Savran omit Jacob's dream (Gen. 31), and the bold theophany of Genesis 35:9–13? Understandable, but still troubling, are Savran's critical suppositions about the biblical text. He speaks of 'Deuteronomic reworking of the Sinai traditions' (24); 'a highly composite set of traditions' (27); 'subsequent editing' (53); 'an earlier stage of the story' where Jacob wrestles with a demon (37), and that the Genesis 32 scene is 'actually pagan in origin' (84); the story of Balaam's ass 'may have

originated as an independent narrative' (46); 'multiple sources in our text' (93); 'a new ending … was subsequently appended' (154); and 'a complex redactional history' (164). There is no factual basis for these critical notions. Pure fancy, they question the integrity of God's Word.

This fallacy leads Savran to miss important interpretational clues. Instead of allowing the text to indicate that the *Malakh* who spoke to Hagar was actually Yahweh, Savran posits 'different redactional layers of the text' (128). The pentateuchal author, however, plainly notes that the one who spoke to Hagar, the *Malakh*, was Yahweh (Gen. 16:13). The *Malakh* and Yahweh are one, yet distinct. In short, Savran treats the text as an interesting, well-composed human literary document.

Strangely, Savran connects the deaths of Nadav and Abihu (28), and Uzzah's 'lethal proximity' to God with theophany (191), but no visual elements are evident. In fact, Savran later concedes that 'no one dies in any of the theophany narratives' (193). Similarly, Jeremiah's call (Jer. 1) is probably God speaking to the prophet's mind, not theophany. Several typos are: 'and' should probably be 'either' (p. 151, line 13); 'Samuuel' (p. 160, line 23); 'derives' should be derived (p. 177, line 1); 'significance' should be significant (p. 187, line 19).

Despite these observations, I enjoyed the reading and would recommend it to others interested in a detailed narrative portrayal and character study of the recipients of theophany.

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A SURE GROUND ON WHICH TO STAND: THE RELATION OF AUTHORITY AND INTERPRETIVE METHOD IN LUTHER'S APPROACH TO SCRIPTURE
Mark D. Thompson
Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005, xviii + 336 pages, £19.99, ISBN: 1-84227-145-8

How Luther regarded and consequently interpreted the Bible has remained one of the most disputed questions amongst scholars of the reformation over the past century. During this time it has received answers portraying Luther as the virtual forerunner of a wide spectrum of later movements including fundamentalism, higher criticism, existentialism, and neo-Orthodoxy. To sort out this problem, while avoiding the anachronism plaguing the former solutions, Mark D. Thompson, Director of Studies at Moore College (Sydney), performs the necessary tasks of extracting Luther from a post-Enlightenment mould and freshly examining the entire Luther corpus against the backdrop of Luther's patristic and medieval exegetical inheritance. Drawing together scattered threads throughout the Luther corpus concerning the character of Scripture, Thompson contends that Luther perceived the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, down to the very words of the text, but without denying its human authorship or literary traits. As a result, Luther's hermeneutical approach analyzed the sacred text according to four interrelated categories: *inspiratio* (its God-breathed quality); *tota scriptura* (its unity); *claritas scripturae* (its intelligibility); and *sola scriptura* (its salvific sufficiency). Thompson succeeds admirably in leaving no stone unturned