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Review: Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther

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II analogy, Arnold points out that believers are between the invasive victory of D-Day in Normandy and V.E. Day a year later. They are still in a battle, though a resounding victory has already been won, a predictive and determinative victory signaling the total defeat of Satan and his assignation to the lake of fire in days to come.

Michael Pocock

The Origin of the Bible. Edited by Philip W. Comfort. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992. 308 pp. \$15.99.

This book's purpose is to provide "an overview of how the Bible was first inspired, canonized, read as sacred literature, copied in ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and translated into the languages of the world" (introduction). This objective has been achieved in clear, concise, and comprehensive terms and in an attractive format. It will perhaps be most useful to persons with little or no formal Bible training, but pastors and advanced students will also find it helpful.

The first section deals with the authority and inspiration of the Bible and contains essays by F. F. Bruce, Carl F. H. Henry, J. I. Packer, and Harold O. J. Brown. Second, the canon is the subject of contributions by R. T. Beckwith, Milton Fisher, and R. K. Harrison. Third, Milton Fisher and Leland Ryken address the Bible as a literary text. Fourth, Mark R. Norton and Philip W. Comfort review the matter of Bible texts and manuscripts. Fifth, Bible translation is the concern of Larry Walker, Raymond Elliott, Philip W. Comfort, and Victor Walter. The chapters by Beckwith, Fisher (on the New Testament canon), Ryken, and Comfort (on New Testament texts and manuscripts) are highlights and would serve well as required reading in courses in biblical introduction.

Though a work of this kind might (and no doubt will) be censured by critical scholarship for its unabashed adherence to a long tradition of pious reflection on the matters dealt with, it is that very commitment that will strike a responsive chord in the minds and hearts of Bible believers who want to know more about the biblical phenomena as well as the Bible itself. The editor is to be commended for drawing together these stimulating and informative studies in such an accessible and inexpensive package.

Eugene H. Merrill

Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther. By Michael V. Fox. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991. 217 pp. \$32.95.

Fox's work joins five others in the current *Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament*, edited by James L. Crenshaw. The book includes 14 chapters in four major units: commentary, literary discussion, character analysis, and text history.

Regarding the genre of *Esther*, Fox accepts four of the seven common identifications: diaspora story (which really only shows the setting), history (but only from the writer's point of view), festival etiology, and festival lections (but these last two concern only the small portion of the book referring to the Feast of Purim). None of these genre seems adequate to describe the book, which ought to be some-

thing about the preservation of the people of Israel in the face of hostility while in the Diaspora.

Fox leaves open the place of God in the story, since he believes that is what the author intended. In doing so, he rejects or at least leaves ambivalent the references often called oblique allusions. Fox is skeptical about the historicity of the book, rejecting arguments of many scholars. This trend toward accepting a biblical book as metahistorical while rejecting its actual historicity does not satisfy those who believe the Bible is rooted in history. The commentary unit, influenced by the literary approach, is insightful and helpful. His discussion on Mordecai's reasons for refusing to bow to Haman is an example. He lists four suggested reasons and chooses the final one, which is that Haman was "a scion of Israel's archetypical enemy" (p. 44).

Fox divides the Book of Esther into acts and scenes. While not all readers will agree with all these divisions of the book, the method is surely a correct one and aids in the understanding of the purpose of the book. A primary concept in the book is "character," and Fox's discussion of the various characters is helpful. He is balanced in his approach and careful in placing the characters in the historical setting. His criticism of some of the recent feminist excoriations of Esther is a good example of the way he insists on the historical perspective of the book for determining character rather than imposing a contemporary approach on an ancient genre.

Overall this book provides perspective and insight into the canonical Book of Esther.

Homer Heater, Jr.

Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job. Edited by Roy B. Zuck. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992. 488 pp. Paper, \$22.95.

Students interested in serious study of Job will refer to this collection of essays over and over again. Divided into two parts—Overviews of the Book of Job and Specific Themes and Passages in the Book of Job—some 34 selections, reprinted from a wide variety of sources, deal with almost every aspect of Job scholarship. Among the authors are Gregory W. Parsons, Robert Gordis, Édouard Dhorme, Matitahu Tsevat, Claus Westermann, and Norman C. Habel. The breadth of the work is seen not only in this selective list of contributors but in the range of subject matter from the devotional homily by Mark R. Littleton to the technical discussion of *צדקה* ("justice") in Job by Sylvia Haberman Scholnick. If there is a weakness to the book, it may be the heterogeneous nature of the collection. Nearly everyone will find something useful here but few will find everything to their taste.

Zuck is to be commended for assembling in such a convenient and inexpensive format important studies on Job that otherwise would remain unknown to many readers or difficult to access by others.

Eugene H. Merrill

Job the Silent. By Bruce Zuckerman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. 294 pp. \$29.95.

How could James write of the patience of Job (James 5:11) when the Book of Job seems to present him as patient only in Job 1 and 2,