

The Unholy in the Holy Scripture: The Dark Side of the Bible. By Gerd Lüdemann. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. 167 pp. \$14.00.

Gerd Lüdemann is professor of New Testament and director of the Institute of Early Christian Studies at the University of Göttingen. As the title of this work implies, he takes a very critical stance toward the Bible, arguing that it supports genocide, anti-Semitism, intolerance, and violence. In the liberal tradition of Adolf von Harnack, Lüdemann calls for the "ruthless application of historical criticism" (p. 135), an approach he believes will expose the incredibility of Christian creeds and move churches away from what he describes as their untenable and ineffective reliance on the Bible.

Like others who have come before him, Lüdemann raises important questions for conservatives to consider, highlighting areas in which some perspectives on the Christian tradition collide with popular, postmodern axioms. He writes with the self-assured, "scholarly" detachment that was more at home in Harnack's day than today, so some readers may question whether he himself has adequately learned the lessons of recent philosophy and history. In particular, it is unfortunate that Lüdemann's protest against "ineffective" biblical preaching offers the churches no better alternative than the impotent moralism and noncreedal ecumenism of his liberal predecessors.

Don Laing with Robert A. Pyne

Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshittâ and Harklean Versions. By George Anton Kiraz. 4 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996. \$529.25 (for the set).

One of the interesting developments in contemporary biblical research from a textual standpoint is Syriac studies. In recent years a number of significant tools for studying the ancient Syriac versions of both Old and New Testaments have been published. This four-volume set, a worthy contribution to this process, deals with some of the major Syriac witnesses to the four Gospels of the New Testament.

Before describing the design and purpose of these volumes, it may be helpful to comment briefly on the multidimensional nature of early translations of the Gospels into Syriac. The segment of the early Christian church that utilized Syriac or one of the other Aramaic dialects as its first language was both widespread and influential in the Near East. In addition to producing a sizable corpus of Christian theological, exegetical, and devotional literature, the Syriac-speaking church also wanted to make the Bible available to its constituency in a variety of forms. In addition to the Peshitta (which eventually became the standard Syriac version of the Bible), there was also the Diatessaron (a harmony of the four Gospels in Syriac), various forms of the so-called Vetus Syra (e.g., Curetonian and Sinaitic), the Philoxenian version (no longer extant for the Gospels), the Syro-Palestinian version (a translation into a Palestinian dialect of Aramaic used by certain early Christian communities), and the Harklean version (a literal seventh-century Syriac translation). The fact that translations of the Syriac biblical text were so numerous bears witness to a strong commitment on the part of this early Christian community to make the

Scriptures available in its vernacular language. These versions, especially the earlier ones, should be of interest to scholars concerned with the early history of the New Testament.

In the case of the Syriac Gospels, however, comparison of these versions has been difficult because they were published as separate entities in sometimes out-of-print and hard-to-procure volumes. Kiraz, inspired by Oxford Syriacist Sebastian P. Brock, has greatly facilitated the comparative task by producing an edition of the Syriac Gospels that aligns their text in such a way that verbal comparison is relatively easy. For each of the four Gospels he presents the Syriac text (where extant) of Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshitta, and Harclean, in that order. The Diatessaron, the Philoxenian, and the Syro-Palestinian are excluded from this project because of the absence of reliable editions or other technical reasons. On a verse-by-verse basis Kiraz arranges each version below the other. A system of diacritical markings indicates places where there is no verbal correspondence or where there are instances of lost text. In all but one case Kiraz has used the standard, previously published editions of these texts in this edition. However, in the case of the Harclean version his edition depends on Vatican Ms. Syr. 268, especially prepared for this work along with a helpful introduction by Andreas Juckel.

Hopefully these volumes will encourage students to explore the rich heritage of the early Syriac versions of the Bible. These versions are extremely important, both in their own right as an influential part of the larger corpus of Syriac literature and also for the witness they bear to the textual history of the Greek New Testament.

Richard A. Taylor

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. Vol. 8: מִרְלָקָד. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry. Translated by Douglas W. Stott. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997. 560 pp. + xxiv. \$45.00.

This volume contains sixty-six entries. Major entries (of ten or more pages in length) include לשון, "tongue"; מאס, "regard lightly"; מגן, "shield"; מדבר, "wilderness, desert"; מדה, "measure"; מוה, "death"; מסר, "rain"; מים, "water"; מלא, "fill, be full"; מלאך, "messenger"; מלחמה, "war"; מלך, "king"; מלך, "Molech"; מנחה, "gift, offering"; מצא, "find, meet"; מצבה, "massebah"; מצרים, "Egypt"; and מקום, "place."

Among the more notable contributions are (1) S. Talmon's thorough examination of מדבר, "wilderness, desert," which includes a careful analysis of the word's semantic field and synonyms; (2) E. Lipinski's study of מהר, "marriage price," which contains a survey of relevant data from the ancient Near East; (3) the entry on "death" (three contributors), which looks at the concept sociologically and theologically; (4) C. Dohmen's contribution on מזבח, "altar," which surveys the function of altars in the ancient Near East and in the Old Testament; (5) H.-J. Zobel's article on קטר, "rain," which discusses the importance of rain to ancient Israel, as well as Yahweh's usurpation of Baal's role of rain-giver; (6) the entry on מים, "water" (by R. Clements and H.-J. Fabry), which discusses the importance of water for sustenance, as well as the use of the term in religious contexts; (7) the lengthy dis-



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