

Kaiser wrestles with that thorny issue of the center of a biblical theology. What central concept or notion might be capable of providing a focus and fulcrum for writing a comprehensive Old Testament synthetic theology? Covenant has been and still remains in many circles the central biblical category. Others recommend the Kingdom of God. And yet others suggest such important but vacuous concepts as "the presence of God"—concepts so broad they can't help but be inclusive. Kaiser chooses the concept of promise as the center of his theology. He developed this at length in his *Toward an Old Testament Theology*. Promise is perhaps promising, but it too holds the danger of becoming formal and all too inclusive. Kaiser's center itself turns out to be a large circumference circle. Perhaps those are correct who state that the Bible is so multifaceted and rich that no single notion can encompass all the various theologies without slighting any.

The book really appears to be a repackaging of his earlier "Toward" volumes. By far and away he cites himself more than any other writer in the author index. The book may be good for church libraries or the undergraduate collection, but it doesn't confront the modern critical enterprise seriously enough. He tends to be positivistic in his treatment of biblical texts, leveling all texts on the basis of divine inspiration and building an inferential chain from one to another irrespective of historical context. He is definitely premillennial in theological orientation, claiming that the Jew is still the key to Paul's soteriology, and seeing a return of Israel to the land as part of Jesus' parousia.

The book, in the opinion of this reviewer, does not provide an evangelical alternative that would recommend this volume as the agenda setter for the "rediscovering of the Old Testament" that we so desperately need.

Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation*, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1989, 348 pp., (paper), ISBN 0-8308-1751-4

Reviewed by Vern Sheridan Poythress, Westminster Theological Seminary

Biblical scholars are expected to have received training in humanistic disciplines of interpretation, including historical study and the study of languages based on classical philology. But until recently twentieth-century linguistics has largely bypassed most of them, despite the influence of James Barr's renowned book *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). The widespread ignorance of linguistics notably hinders sound exegesis.

Cotterell and Turner's book provides an excellent remedy. The authors not only demonstrate that linguistics is supremely relevant to biblical interpretation, but also take care to provide access to the most important types of linguistic skills that can bear fruit in exegesis. They wisely concentrate on linguistic theories of meaning, involving semantics and pragmatics, because these are most serviceable for exegesis and literary study. Included are chapters on the relation of authors and texts to meaning (chapter 3), common errors in word study (chapter 4), positive approaches to word meanings (chapter 5), sentences (chapter 6), discourse (chapters 7 and 8), and nonliteral language (chapter 9). In particular the difficult, linguistically unsettled area of discourse analysis (analysis of larger units of text as coherent wholes) has received a good share of their attention. A large number of examples are included to flesh out the principles, but an even larger sample would have been useful for people with little previous exposure to the subject.

In order to illustrate linguistic principles in action, the authors have often had to choose sides on disputed questions both in linguistics and in well-known exegetical disputes. Other

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their main point is that insights from linguistics can throw the balance in favor of one exegetical option, and on such points their judgment is consistently sound. On some matters of dispute they have had to choose a particular linguistic or exegetical framework almost from the beginning, but here also they have tried to stay in the mainstream and have avoided eccentricities.

The authors are well-informed in both linguistics and biblical interpretation, but they do not presuppose any knowledge of linguistics on the part of their readers. Readers with no previous exposure to linguistics will find some parts heavy reading, but nevertheless rewarding. The book is clearly written and reasonably self-contained, but also offers further resources through numerous bibliographical references.

This book meets an important need in the field of biblical interpretation. Some excellent books already exist on the lexicology of biblical languages, but until now nothing that introduces the full range of linguistic topics most relevant for exegesis. This book should therefore be regarded virtually as required reading for biblical scholars. Moreover, the ideas of the book are valuable to a much broader audience. Though almost all the important examples are taken from the Bible, the principles are relevant for the entire field of literary interpretation.

Susan V. Gallagher and Roger Lundin, *Literature Through the Eyes of Faith*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989, xxvii + 192 pp., \$9.95, ISBN 0-06-065318-3.

Reviewed by Margaret Masson, Calvin College

Literature Through the Eyes of Faith is one of the Christian College Coalition's series of textbooks which offer undergraduates the opportunity of viewing particular disciplines from the perspective of the Christian faith. That these books meet a need is, in my view, unquestionable. Most of us who teach in Christian Coalition colleges try to help our students develop responsible and thoughtful Christian world-views, and Gallagher and Lundin's book, while not without its shortcomings, helpfully models just such an attempt.

The book is divided into three parts. The introduction, "Literature and the Christian," and the first two sections, "Why should we read literature?" and "What happens when we read?" tend to be theoretical. They lay a philosophical and historical basis for developing a Christian response to literature. Part Three, "How should we select and evaluate what we read?" is more practical, dealing with questions that arise in the classroom. Some issues, such as "Was this author a Christian?" or the tendency to force Christian meanings onto any and every helpless text, are particularly relevant in the Christian college classroom. Other issues, such as the way literary forms create meaning, and the thorny but crucial contemporary questions about classics and the canon, have a wider and weightier significance. The writers manage to treat such divergent concerns with consistent grace: they neither condescend nor allow a reader to remain insular and parochial. This book could help to extend students' horizons almost as surely as the works of literature we commend to them.

In his foreword Nicholas Wolterstorff, general editor of the series, accurately points to the other main strengths of this book: the authors usually write in a clear, accessible style; they support their apologetics with a helpful modelling of how to read specific texts; and, perhaps most important, they write with a freshness, poise and pertinence enriched by their engagement with contemporary critical debate. The message this sends students is surely a good one: this stuff is not to be feared and evaded; one can enter the fray with confidence and curiosity as well as with critical selectivity.

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