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Book Reviews: New International Biblical Commentary : Genesis. By John E. Hartley, John E., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000. Pp. xvii+393. Np. ISBN 1-56563-211-7 : New International Biblical Commentary : Joshua, Judges, Ruth. By Gordon J. Harris, Cheryl A. Brown, Michael S. Moore. Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2000. Pp. xvii+398. Np. ISBN 0-85364-726-7. New International Biblical Commentary : 1 and 2 Samuel. By Mary J. Evans. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000. Pp. x+267. N.p. ISBN 1-56563-579-5 hb; 1-56563-215-X pb
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Doktorvater (to whom the book is dedicated) can be seen in the illuminating use she makes of Egyptian art in search for the roots of the figure of the goddess of wisdom in the world of the Ancient Near East. Schroer sheds light on many of the texts she discusses, particularly the feminine imagery for wisdom in the Book of Proverbs and several of the less familiar wise-women texts of the Hebrew Bible. She suggests with some justice that the position of women in society tends to improve in time of war or crisis. Such might have been the rise in status of women in Post-Exilic Israel that they introduced a new stream of woman wisdom into Israel's talk about God. She argues, correctly I think, that the woman wisdom imagery that acts as a frame for Proverbs should not be seen simply as the survival of earlier goddess mythology, but that its newness will be best appreciated when read in conjunction with other writings of the return, notably, the P-document, Job, the later Isaiah and the Book of Ruth. Like most feminist critics, she has little stomach for Jesus Ben Sira and has her revenge by describing his depiction of the relationship between the student and wisdom as 'eroticized in ways that from time to time cross the line into pornography'. She is more indulgent in her assessment of the Book of Wisdom, speculating on a possible link with the shadowy Therapeutae described in Philo. She suggests that it may have originated in circles in which Jewish women from Egypt/Alexandria were in the ascendant and in which women's religious traditions as well as a female Sophia-image of God were cultivated.

Schroer tells the reader several times how she failed to gain a canonical *missa* as a teacher of theology in her native Switzerland for refusing to correct an essay published in this collection, 'The Spirit, the Wisdom and the Dove'. The curiosity of this reviewer was whetted, but it turns out to be a rickety platform from which to

proclaim one's status as victim. It is in essence a 'history of religions' approach to the dove imagery in the Gospel accounts of the Baptism of Jesus. Along the way, Schroer has gathered much information about the symbolism of doves as messengers of the goddess of love in ancient Mediterranean religions, but the methodology is rather tired. Her weakness is to go directly from some rather interesting facts about dove symbolism to the conclusion that 'when the Second Testament adopts the dove symbol it most certainly adopts the erotic-emotional suggestions as well'. The point is scarcely argued, beyond the arguments from scholarly authority (Othmar Keel and others have already pointed out the association) and the cultural environment (Christian groups 'would have found the imagery ... immediately familiar'). Thence, by way of Gnosticism, she hazards the proposition that 'in the earliest Jesus tradition Sophia Christology is closely connected to a Sophia theology that conceived God in female form as divine Sophia'. The picture of Gnosticism emerging is in truth rather woolly. Several of Schroer's positions elsewhere are open to challenge, and she has the good grace to admit as much in additional footnotes.

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Evans. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000. Pp. x+267. N.p. ISBN 1-56563-579-5 hb; 1-56563-215-X pb.

This reviewer has already commented on several volumes in the *New International Biblical Commentary* in an earlier number of the *ITQ* (Summer 2001), so there is little need to describe its main features or intended readership here. Few commentary series achieve their objectives in every volume, and such is the case with the volumes reviewed here.

John Hartley is Professor of Old Testament at the Haggard Graduate School of Theology, Azusa Pacific University and an ordained minister of the Free Methodist Church. The standpoint from which he addresses Genesis is very conservative. Moses is seriously proposed as the first link in the editorial chain of Genesis without any consideration of the reasons that makes this highly unlikely (p. 16). The inclusion of the Joseph narrative, conjectured as composed by a wisdom school at the time of Solomon, 'finalised the formation of Genesis'. One will search the index in vain for any mention of the traditional sources of Genesis. Consequently, the patriarchal narrative is reliable, Abraham being dated to the end of the 21st century BC on the basis of the biblical chronologies (26). The longevity of the antediluvians is 'perplexing' (93). If one were to begin with Hartley on Genesis, one might be tempted to dismiss the entire NIBC project.

The joint authors of the Joshua-Judges-Ruth volume address their task with a greater degree of assurance. The introductory essays are useful models of concise and balanced scholarship aimed at a fairly general audience. It does not follow what has become almost a piece of new orthodoxy in having a woman scholar comment on Ruth. The woman contributor (Cheryl Brown) comments on the more violent Judges and does not shirk the issues that often make this a difficult book for the neophyte

reader of the OT. J. Gordon Harris permits himself a number of excursions on topics such as Joshua in the Canon, and divergences between the Greek and Hebrew texts. One devoted to the topic of Holy War succinctly summarises the issue, noting that 'the wars of Yahweh' is a more appropriate term than 'holy war'. In his commentary on Ruth, Michael Moore takes some well-aimed shots at the 'breezy and speculative' air which has gathered over much recent Ruth research, resulting in what he considers to be shallow politicisation rather than convincing interpretation. All three attempt to incorporate the results of narrative approaches to their assigned books with pleasing results.

Mary J. Evans lectures in the London Bible College. Her commentary on the two books of Samuel does not break new ground, and the constraints of space do not allow for much by way of detailed discussion of the issues raised by the text. The ten-page introduction seems intended for the reader who has little background in biblical studies. Like the best of the series, its unassuming strengths will be appreciated by those who use it as an aid in daily liturgy preparation or for personal bible study.

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The Gift Of The Psalms. By Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000. Pp. xiv+178. N.p. ISBN 1-56563-474-8.

A short study of the psalms by Roland Murphy needs little recommendation. One that gives a brief commentary on every psalm of the psalter in so compact a form is a gift indeed. Murphy recommends us to read the psalms 'aggressively' rather than passively before having recourse to any aids such as commentaries, for it is in struggling that we learn how to appropriate them (x). Nevertheless, he helpfully provides three introduc-