Letter & Spirit 2 (2006): 235–248

Reviews & Notices

~: **Carol M. Kaminski** :~

From Noah to Israel:
Realization of the Primaeval Blessing after the Flood
(London: T & T Clark, 2004)

From the first pages to the last, the "story" told in Scripture is the history of God's plan to impart his saving blessing upon his people. The divine plan begins with the primaeval blessing of the first man and woman: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). It culminates in the blessings extended through the sacramental liturgy of the new people of God—in the washing of robes in baptism (see Rev. 22:14), and in the eucharistic marriage feast of the lamb (see Rev. 19:9). In between, God's covenant promises are expressed in terms of blessings—to Noah (Gen. 9:1), Abraham (Gen. 12:3), Israel (Num. 6:27), and David (2 Sam. 7:29).

In this intriguing study, which assumes the literary unity of the final form of the canonical texts, Kaminski traces the progress of the divine blessing at a crucial juncture in salvation history—from the great flood through the raising up of the children of Israel.

A key interpretive question is how the divine blessing was carried forward following its restatement to Noah and his sons (Gen. 9:1). The Tower of Babel incident (Gen. 11:1–9) shows Noah's descendants seemingly afraid or resisting the mandate to multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 11:4); thus, it appears that God is required to forcefully "scatter" them. However, Kaminski notices that this "scattering" motif is actually introduced earlier—in a summary statement about the career of Noah's sons (Gen. 9:19).

In an insightful and detailed discussion, Kaminski notes that, in older translations, the decisive Hebrew verb, נָפַץ, is rendered correctly as "scattered" or "dispersed." More recent translations, however, beginning with the Revised Standard Version, translate נָפַץ as "peopled" or "populated," thereby implying the primaeval blessing is fulfilled in Noah's three sons ("... from these the whole earth was peopled" Gen. 9:19 RSV).

Kaminski argues for a return to the older translations, pointing out that elsewhere in the Old Testament, נָפַץ is often used to describe God's judgment against Israel and the nations (see Gen. 49:7; Deut. 4:27; 28:62, 64; Jer. 13:24; Ezek. 34:5, 6, 12).

If the scattering of Noah's sons is taken to be a judgment against them, a judgment confirmed by the scattering of Noah's descendants at Babel, how, if at all, does the primaeval blessing advance? Kaminski locates the clue in the table of nations (Gen. 10). She observes that the literary form of Shem's genealogy (Gen. 11:10–26) is "almost identical" with that of the antediluvian genealogy presented for Adam's son, Seth (Gen. 5:1–32). And she demonstrates that the two genealogies also share the same "theological function" in the Genesis narrative. As Seth's line was depicted bearing the divine blessing before the flood, Shem's line takes up the divine blessing after the flood.

This conclusion is bolstered by the restatement of the Shemite genealogy after Babel (Gen. 11:10–26), which reveals Abram to be the "goal" of Shem's line. Indeed, in Abraham's descendants, God renews his primaeval blessing (Gen. 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4).

In her closely argued discussion, Kaminski does not explore the possible narrative implications of Noah's "fall" and the respective roles played by Ham and Shem (see Gen. 9:20–27). This "fall" could serve as a further clue as to why the blessing continued only in Shem's line (see Gen. 9:26). Perhaps it is no coincidence that the story of Shem and Ham is recounted immediately after the "scattering" of Noah's sons is described.

Kaminski is strong in showing how the biblical narrative identifies Israel as the bearer of God's primaeval blessing to the world. Israel's fecundity in Egypt (Exod. 1:7) is recalled in language that echoes both the original blessing (Gen. 1:28; 9:1), and the promise to Abram (Gen. 12:1–2). Thus, she helps establish an "intrinsic connection" between Genesis' history of creation (Gen. 1–11) and the salvation history that forms the rest of the book (Gen. 12–50). She further helps us see how God's original intentions for creation are borne forward by the redemption and election of Israel.

Kaminski's study is worthy of the deeper conclusion she leaves us with: "If the primaeval blessing is interpreted in narrative context, then it shows that God's particular blessing to Israel is the means through which his intention for creation—thwarted by sin and divine judgment in the primaeval history, but preserved by grace—will be restored to the world. . . . The particular blessing progresses by means of a divine promise, from Noah to Israel, but it is not for Israel's sake alone, but for the sake of the world."

∾ Alice M. Sinnott ∾

The Personification of Wisdom,
Society for Old Testament Study Monographs
(Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

The personification of Wisdom as a female figure is a powerful motif in the biblical books of Proverbs, Job, Sirach, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Baruch. This personification is "profound and dynamic," and has few true parallels in the literatures of the ancient Near East, Sinnott writes in this short study, which is based on her 1997 doctoral dissertation for Oxford University.

In the Scriptures, Wisdom is depicted as being enthroned in heaven (Sir. 24:4–5)—with God from all eternity (Sir. 1:4; 24:9), and "before the beginning of the earth" (Prov. 8:22–31). She is the artisan of creation (see Wis. of Sol. 7:21–22; 8:6; 14:2), and was sent to dwell with all flesh as a gift from God (Sir. 1:10; Bar. 3:37). She is a particular gift to Israel (Sir. 24:8), and is manifest in the Law given through Moses (Sir. 24:23; Bar. 4:1). By forsaking Wisdom, Israel was conquered and exiled (Bar. 3:9–13).

Wisdom will be the salvation of Israel (Wis. of Sol. 9:18; 10:1–21). But she is also the "tree of life" for all peoples (Prov. 3:18). Her ways cannot be found but for the revelation of God (Job 28:12–28; Bar. 3:31). Hence, she is sent as God's divine word or speech, to cry out in the marketplace, to announce her ways and to issue judgment on those who would prefer their own devices to her counsel (Prov. 1:20–33). Wisdom prepares a table and calls all people to eat her bread and drink her wine (Prov. 9:1–6; Sir. 24:19–21) She loves those who love her (Prov. 8:17), and promises to those who love her "a beautiful crown" (Prov. 4:6–9).

Sinnott traces lady Wisdom's appearance in Israel's Scriptures to the trauma of 586 B.C. and beyond, with the destruction of the Temple and the exile. In establishing a post-exilic context for these texts, Sinnott points out that there is little mention in this literature of the Temple, the sacrificial system, or the Davidic dynasty. It is telltale that Wisdom teaches, not in the Temple, but in the marketplace.

Sinnott finds in Proverbs, especially, echoes of the exilic and post-exilic prophets. She demonstrates the close parallels between Wisdom's condemnations and those of the prophets (compare, for example, Prov. 1:24–25; Isa. 65:12; Jer. 29:19). Likewise, Wisdom's threats are couched in language very similar to the prophets (compare Prov. 1:26–27; Hos. 5:6).

Although she acknowledges that most of the biblical descriptions of Wisdom as a female are written in poetic form, Sinnott draws no conclusions from this. In

the same way, she suggests, but does not pursue, a liturgical locus for the rise of this unique understanding of Wisdom. "It is very likely that the new articulation took shape primarily in the people's liturgical celebrations, as it is in celebrations and rituals that the people of Israel would seek to give meaning to their lives by 're-membering' Yahweh's deeds on their behalf in the past and celebrating them in the present." This is a potentially fertile insight that, unfortunately, is left at that.

In general, Sinnott argues that the figure of Wisdom functioned during the exile to assure Israel of God's sovereignty over creation and his continued care and presence at a time of chaos and alienation. As for the later text, the Wisdom of Solomon, which dates to the first century B.C., Sinnott sees a similar function for the female figure of Wisdom—"to encourage and persuade [Jews] to remain devoted to their ancestral heritage while living in a Hellenist milieu."

Unfortunately, Sinnott does little to synthesize her findings on Wisdom or to suggest deeper conclusions than that these texts functioned to give assurance and comfort to Israel in a time of trial. As a result, she stops short of answering a crucial question—why was Wisdom portrayed in feminine rather than masculine terms? In passing, she suggests that it could have been a reaction to the goddess worship in surrounding cultures. But she never ventures to explain why Wisdom is portrayed as a woman rather than a man.

Sinnott does a good job in helping us to see how Wisdom is depicted as the active and saving presence of God in the world. One would have hoped to see her suggest how this Old Testament portrait was taken up in the New Testament and in the patristic writings. However, she gives no consideration to how these texts have been treated in the interpretive traditions of either Judaism or early Christianity.

Nor does she pursue other possible intertextual avenues. She notices that the depiction of Solomon's passionate courtship of Wisdom is replete with nuptial imagery (Wis. of Sol. 8:1–8). But she does not consider the possible connections between personified Wisdom and the imagery found in Israel's other ancient wisdom book, the Song of Solomon. In addition, one wishes she had considered the relation of personified Wisdom to the broader scriptural theme of God's nuptial relationship with Israel (Isa. 61:10; Hosea 2:15–22).

~: Ellen Bradshaw Aitken :~

Jesus' Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion,
Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 53
(Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004).

Form criticism has helped us see that, before the New Testament was written down, primitive narratives of Christ's passion and death were performed or enacted in the liturgy of the early Church—especially in the baptismal rite and in the celebration of the Eucharist. Indeed, numerous fragments of hymns, ritual prayers, and confessions of faith have long been identified, especially in the epistles, but also in the Gospels and the Apocalypse.

In this understated and evocatively written study, Aitken explores the complex interrelations of narrative and ritual, Scripture and liturgy, communal reminiscence and self-identity. It is an area that has been studied previously by scholars. However, Aitken has made a real contribution by focusing on how the Scriptures of Israel shaped the early Church's liturgical remembrance and, in turn, the formation of several pivotal New Testament texts. To excellent effect, Aitken yokes recent scholarship on the use of the Old Testament in the New to the insights of "speech act" and "reader response" theories. She is especially effective in showing how primitive accounts of the passion functioned as "performative language," that is, as language that not only describes historical events but also accomplishes or reenacts those events in the life of the early Christian community.

In incisive readings of select passages from 1 Corinthians (11:23–26; 15:3–5), 1 Peter (2:22–25), Hebrews, and the noncanonical Epistle of Barnabas, she pays particular attention to the formative influence of the Exodus and Israel's trials in the wilderness, as well as to psalms and prophecies about the righteous who suffer and are vindicated by God. In the early Christian liturgy, she sees "the reactualization of Scripture in the context of its performance in ritual. This process of reactualization entails an identification between the 'there and then' of Scripture and the 'here and now' of the present situation of the community." She sees also that, in the eucharistic liturgy, especially, the Church is defined as "the people with whom, by Jesus' death, God makes the authentic covenant."

The book's centerpiece is Aitken's beautiful reading of Hebrews. With Ernst Käsemann (*The Wandering People of God* [1984]), she sees the letter as "a continuous allusion to the community's liturgy." Indeed, she goes further in identifying the letter as "a mystagogic text [that] seeks to lead its already initiated audience into further understanding of the narrative and practice of the community." The letter presupposes a liturgical basis for the Church's identity, she observes, namely

that "the people of God are defined by cultic acts"—particularly the ritual act of covenant renewal around the memory of Jesus.

Aitken powerfully demonstrates how "psalms, stories, hymns, liturgical patterns, and ritual observances" form a kind of network of quotation and allusion that connects the experience of the Christian initiate with Christ's suffering and Israel's experience in the wilderness. She is especially perceptive on the letter's use of typology to show how the Exodus narrative is "transferred from a geographical dimension into a cosmological dimension. The promised land is now the heavenly realm, and the journey is now one into the heavenly temple where Jesus is seated at God's right hand and where true worship is offered."

Aitken's study of the "poetics of the passion" opens a promising avenue for future study of the liturgical influence on New Testament texts. Indeed, her work helps us to recover some of the most ancient traditions regarding the Bible and the liturgy.

One of the oldest traditions is preserved in the letter of Pliny the Younger to the emperor Trajan, circa 112. Pliny tells how Christians gather to "sing . . . a hymn to Christ as if to a god . . . and to bind themselves by oath." This is the process that Aitken helps to put us in touch with—how these primitive hymns and oaths, or confessions of faith, enacted in the liturgy, helped shape the early Church's identity and the composition of Scripture.

Aitken has advanced our appreciation of how the life of Christ, the history of salvation, and the destiny of the individual meet and embrace in the liturgy of the Church. In an insightful, if brief, discussion of the Emmaus story (Luke 24), she even suggests that Christ himself is the source of this profound Christian sacramental understanding.

As she writes: "The Emmaus story speaks of 'recognition'—the moment of saying 'this is that'—through scriptural interpretation and cultic action. It thus narrates the instant of mimesis—the reenactment of the words of the Scriptures and the ritual meal in terms of Jesus. Moreover, Luke's story presents the risen Jesus as the one who first, for these disciples, engages in this action. Jesus is the one who interprets his suffering and death out of the Scriptures and performs the ritual of the meal in such a way that it reveals Jesus. Thus, Jesus is portrayed here as the authoritative initiator and interpreter of the cultic reenactment, just as the tradition quoted in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 shows the earthly Jesus, before his death, as the interpreter of the cult legend of Israel and the initiator of the eucharistic cult."

Jacob Neusner

How Important Was the Destruction of the Second Temple in the Formation of Rabbinic Judaism?
(Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006)

In 70 A.D., the Temple at Jerusalem was burned to the ground by occupying Roman forces, ending the complex religious system of sacrifice and prayer that had defined Jewish self-identity for centuries.

The received scholarly consensus is that 70 A.D. changed everything for the Jewish people, bringing about a virtually new religious and cultural form—rabbinic Judaism. In the rabbinic system, Torah-study replaced a cult organized around Temple prayer and sacrifice, rabbis replaced the priestly caste, and the synagogue replaced the Temple as the center of Israel's social and cultic life.

In his latest book, the prolific Rabbi Neusner challenges this established version of the story. He admits that he himself is among those responsible for helping to establish the scholarly consensus. Here, however, he painstakingly reviews every "canonical" rabbinic document from the first to the seventh centuries for all possible allusions and references to the events of 70. His findings, he argues, cannot be used to support the prevailing thesis; indeed, he says, close study of the rabbinic literature flatly contradicts the present scholarly consensus.

"The destruction of the second Temple in 70 cannot be assigned a critical place in the formative history of rabbinic Judaism," he writes provocatively. "It was more than a footnote, but less then a principal text: to be coped with, not to be confirmed, let alone affirmed, as enduring."

Neusner does not deny that the Temple's destruction changed how Jews lived and worshipped, and that it inflamed eschatological expectations, as expressed in apocryphal writings such as IV Ezra and II Baruch, and political uprisings like that led by Bar Kokhba in 132–135. His analysis of the Mishnah, the great body of rabbinic law which dates to around 200, proves the practical impact the Temple's destruction had on Israel's liturgical life and conduct.

But if the loss of the Temple created a crisis in Israel's liturgy, Neusner argues that it was viewed as "temporary and superficial and raise[d] only some few minor questions of accommodation." He points out that hundreds of legislative provisions in the Mishnah are written as if the Temple were still standing and its cult still functioning. Such passages admit the loss of the Temple, but nonetheless speak of Israel's priesthood, sacrificial system, and holy places "in an ideal present tense of realized reality."

Throughout the Halakhah, the corpus of rabbinic religious law, Neusner

finds the institutions and cult of the Temple portrayed as perpetual, subject to the laws of divine promise, beyond the vicissitudes of history. The overriding sense is that 70 was not "decisive in the supernatural life of holy Israel, which is lived beyond time and above history." The holy city is still prescribed as the goal of pilgrimage; there are rules relating to Temple architecture and liturgy. (By comparison, there are surprisingly few stipulations for synagogue rites and worship.) The Tosefta Berakhot, which dates to 250, still calls for prayer and meal-offerings in the Temple, and instructs Jews, no matter where they live, to direct their prayers toward the Temple—even though the Temple, at that point, lay in ruins beneath a pagan temple erected by the Romans.

What accounts for this seemingly sublime serenity at the heart of early rabbinic Judaism? Neusner locates his explanation in the Aggadah, the collection of rabbinic commentary on Israel's Scriptures. The rabbis, Neusner argues, were thoroughly imbued with a biblical, "covenantal theology." They looked at the events of 70 through the eyes of Moses and the prophets, especially Jeremiah. In fact, Neusner also studies how the rabbinic documents represent and interpret the destruction, in 586 B.C., of the first Temple, built by Solomon, and the subsequent Babylonian captivity.

He concludes that the rabbis interpreted the events of 70 by "recapitulating" the categories of Scripture's prophetic-theological response to the events of 586 B.C. The Temple once again had been destroyed as a punishment for Israel's sins. But Israel's unique covenant relationship with God remained unperturbed. Following the lead of the post-exilic prophets, the rabbis taught that Israel, post-70, could still make atonement and receive forgiveness through acts of repentance and love, and a return to the Law.

Neusner sees nothing at all original in the rabbinic response. "The event of 70 taught no lessons not already imparted in 586." The rabbis' applications of Scripture are "derivative, a mere adaptation of received theological principles." Their proposals for renewal and restoration were nothing more than restatements of the Mosaic Law. The project of rabbinic Judaism was to find a way to live and think between the second Temple and the anticipated third and final one. "And the [rabbinic] answer proves blatant: Israel is to think precisely how and what Moses and the other prophets had taught them to think."

Hence, Neusner concludes that the events of 70 "made no difference" in the formation of rabbinic Judaism. The decisive event in the formation of the rabbinic mind was not 70 A.D. but 586 B.C. "The prophetic-rabbinic Judaism began, not in 70, but in the aftermath of 586 with the formation of Scripture—the Torah of Moses and the teachings of the prophets."

Readers will no doubt form different interpretive judgments about the conclusions Neusner draws from his research. He has gathered an impressive sourcebook that, along with his pointed and even poignant commentary, at times

reads like a new addition to the rabbinic canon. But the evidence he presents could easily be marshaled to support a contrary conclusion—namely that the rabbinic literature was indeed, as the conventional wisdom holds, "a massive reaction to the catastrophe of 70."

Even conceding his point—that the rabbis advanced no fresh theological insights apart from recapitulating biblical ideas about sin and suffering, atonement and repentance, exile and restoration—his study gives us greater insight into the profound depths of their biblical worldview. Further, he helps us to see how, in their interpretations and applications of Scripture, the Word of God continued to live, instruct, and make claims upon the people of God.

Emmanuel Kaniyamparampil

The Spirit of Life:
A Study of the Holy Spirit in the Early Syriac Tradition
(Kerala, India: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, 2003)

Jean Daniélou, in his magisterial, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (1958), long ago suggested that the ancient Syriac Church is the theological heir to the original form of Christianity that developed among the apostles and first disciples in Jerusalem. As Kaniyamparampil amply demonstrates in this excellent book, the Syriac tradition preserves a precious patrimony of theological reflection and exegesis, rich in ancient biblical and Judaic symbolism and allusion.

Based on the author's doctoral dissertation at the Catholic University of Paris, this book surveys the earliest writings in Syriac Christianity—the second-century *Odes of Solomon* (some of the earliest Christian hymns); the *Acts of Thomas*, which dates to the early third century; and the apologetic works of the sage Aphrahat, who lived in the first half of the fourth century. Although not studied directly, there is a generous consideration, too, of the writings of St. Ephrem, the fourth-century sage and exegete.

In all these sources, Kaniyamparampil identifies deep biblical roots for early Syriac pneumatology. Especially important is the depiction of the Spirit hovering over the primordial waters in the creation account (Gen. 1:2). In fact, he sees this depiction as the source for an ancient liturgical practice—the priest gently waving his hands over the gifts of bread and wine during the epiclesis, that part of the eucharistic celebration in which the Holy Spirit is called down to sanctify the gifts.

In addition to a profound engagement with the scriptural texts, Kaniyamparampil identifies the liturgy as the chief inspiration for Syriac devotion

to the Spirit. "The Syriac authors are steeped in the biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit. . . . For early Syriac tradition, the liturgy was the privileged place of expressing its theological experiences and convictions. And it is in the celebration of the holy mysteries that we primarily observe the active faith in the Holy Spirit that this tradition encapsulates."

In an intriguing consideration of the Spirit's role in the Christian life, Kaniyamparampil explores the early feminine or motherly symbolism used to describe the Spirit's work. For instance, God the Father is depicted as a nursing mother in both the *Odes* and in the writings of St. Ephrem.

Kaniyamparampil notes that there is abundant literary evidence that "Judaeo-Christians cherished a mother figure of the Holy Spirit." And, as he points out, the Spirit's work is also described in maternal terms in the early Western tradition—by such respected theological writers as Hippolytus of Rome and Marius Victorinus. As he explains it, such symbolism was far from a heterodox effort to cast the godhead in sexual or gender-oriented terms. Rather it was an effort to reflect, in the light of biblical revelation, on "the action of the Spirit in the divine economy."

Again he finds a deep biblical substratum for feminine imagery of the Spirit. He notes that the Hebrew word for Spirit, רוּחַ, is feminine in gender. Likewise, he notes that רָחַף the related verb used to describe the Spirit's hovering over creation (Gen. 1:2), is also used to describe God's maternal care for his people in the desert—as a mother eagle "flutters over its young" (Deut. 32:11). He also detects the influence of the biblical figure of Wisdom, personified as both feminine and Spirit (see Wisd. of Sol. 7:7; 9:17; Sir. 14:22; 24:7; Prov. 8).

At the heart of this imagery, Kaniyamparampil also sees a decisive liturgical influence. Aphrahat described the Spirit performing a maternal role in bringing Christians to new life as children of God in the "spiritual womb" of baptism. This maternal-feminine imagery, Kaniyamparampil argues convincingly, expresses an original Jewish-Christian belief in the life-giving, salvific action of the Spirit, whereby the believer is regenerated and constantly renewed as a child of God.

In this forceful work of retrieval, Kaniyamparampil helps us to listen anew to some of the first Christian theologians and exegetes, and recovers for us their faith in the divine vitality and fecundity of him whom Aphrahat called "the Spirit of life."

John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno

Sanctified Vision:
An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible
(Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 2005)

There is a wide gulf between the way we read Scripture today and the way it was read by the first Christian fathers and teachers. In this slender and useful volume, O'Keefe and Reno endeavor to bridge that gap. Through close readings of Church fathers such as Origen, Athanasius, Irenaeus, and Augustine, the authors seek to disclose the inner logic of patristic exegesis. Though they cover a scholarly terrain that is already well trod, O'Keefe and Reno consistently offer fresh insights and new perspectives.

Central to the fathers' biblical theology and hermeneutic is their belief in the divine economy—in God's orderly plan for human history, a plan that culminates in the incarnation and cross of Christ. This belief unifies the disparate texts of Scripture into a single narrative, and requires that each text of Scripture be read in the context of "a divine order of events that stretches from the fall of Adam and Eve, through the election of Abraham, the Exodus of the Israelites, the reign of King David, the Babylonian exile, to the coming of Jesus Christ and his fulfillment of all things." This conviction also explains the importance of allegory and typology to the patristic mind, as the fathers sought to read the events of the Old Testament in light of the New and the New Testament in light of the Old.

One could have hoped for a fuller treatment of how patristic habits of interpretation originated in the New Testament authors themselves. But this book is, nonetheless, an excellent introductory text. It is distinguished by its unique emphasis on patristic exegesis as a spiritual science and ascetic discipline. In this, the authors demonstrate an undeniable concord between the goal of the divine economy and the pedagogy of Scripture—each aiming at the sanctification of the believer in Christ.

Their conclusion is a challenge and inspiration to students of the sacred page: "Unlike most modern intellectuals, the Church fathers recognized that good interpretation is most likely to flow from a good person. Patristic exegesis was, finally, a religious exercise. Right reading was the fruit of righteousness. . . . Insofar as the meaning of Scripture directs our attention toward the holiness of God, a reader can only follow and expound that meaning if the soul is purified and prepared to turn its vision toward the divine. 'The mind should also be cleansed,' writes Augustine, 'so that it is able to see [divine] light and cling to it once it is seen.' [*On*

Christian Doctrine, 1.10] The eye of the reader can only follow the Scriptures if vision is sanctified."

~: Kevin J. Vanhoozer :~

The Drama of Doctrine:
A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology
(Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005)

This is a big and admirable book with a big and admirable ambition—to restore doctrine to the center of Christian life, not only in the thinking of pastors and Church leaders, but in the minds and hearts of believers.

Vanhoozer builds his argument around a metaphor that evokes Hans Urs von Balthasar's multi-volume "theo-drama." He recasts theology as a form of *drama*, or, as he puts it, "a performance practice . . . of corresponding one's speech and action to the Word of God." In Vanhoozer's theological drama, the canon of Scripture is the script, the Church (understood in strictly spiritual, not institutional terms) is the company of actors, and the pastor is the director.

His discussion of the canon as a "covenant document" and of the Church as a covenant community is strong. God's covenant promises form Scripture's narrative unity and the new covenant, like the old, establishes with each believer "a personal relationship structured by solemn promises accompanied by ritual ceremonies."

One is frustrated, however, by Vanhoozer's crimped treatment of the sacraments and liturgy. He rightly argues that the Church, through Word and sacrament, is called "to present the body of Christ," and to "insert Church members into the drama of redemptive history by recalling the words and acts of God." He further maintains that there is a *"real presentation"* of Christ in the sacraments and that believers are *"really* drawn into the ongoing theo-dramatic action by the Spirit."

But *how* the covenant relationship is effected by the liturgy, and the nature of Christ's presence and agency in the sacraments, remain fuzzy. We are left with an unsatisfying brand of neo-Calvinism, in which the sacraments are mere symbolic performances or "rehearsals" for some true participation that awaits the age to come.

This criticism is not denominational grousing. It goes, rather, to the central question of Vanhoozer's book—how, in their performance of the faith, are believers to remain faithful to the normative "script" of Scripture? No attempt is made to engage the perspectives of older, more widespread Christian traditions, such as Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Vanhoozer presumes the superiority of the

Reformation's answers on everything from ecclesiology to sacramentology. Yet how these answers square with the practice and beliefs expressed in Scripture is again presumed but not demonstrated, let alone proven.

This is disappointing since Vanhoozer claims at the outset to be advancing a new "Catholic-Evangelical Orthodoxy." One hopes that, in the future, he will see how his theological project would only be enhanced by engagement with the sacramental realism that lies at the heart of Catholic and Orthodox beliefs about the divine liturgy and its relation to biblical salvation history.

Still, there is much to be learned from this book, and much ecumenical common ground to be found in Vanhoozer's equation of doctrine with wisdom: "The drama of doctrine is about refining the dross of textual knowledge into the gold of Christian wisdom by putting one's understanding of the Scriptures into practice. . . . The proper end of the drama is wisdom: lived knowledge, a performance of the truth."

~: Kevin J. Vanhoozer, gen. ed. :~

Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible
(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005)

Overall, this nearly 900-page volume is a remarkable achievement, the first of its kind to treat theology and exegesis as integrated disciplines and to presume a way of reading that synthesizes literary and historical perspectives with traditional notions of divine authorship and inspiration.

The basic methodological ground is covered well, with thorough, competent articles on topics ranging from patristic and medieval exegesis to speech-act and reader-response theories. Key figures in the history of interpretation, especially in the modern era, are well treated. The volume includes a good topical and scriptural index, although one would have hoped for an index of persons, as well.

Scot McKnight's article on "covenant" is very strong, especially in showing how God's covenants reveal his "intent from the beginning of history," and how that intention is ultimately liturgical—"to lead all humans to bow before him in eternal worship and praise." Christopher Seitz, in an excellent treatment of the "canonical approach," emphasizes the decisive role of the "rule of faith" as compelling the Church to an "interlocking and associative interpretation" that embraces both the Old and the New Testaments. Craig Bartholomew's articles on "biblical theology," and "deconstruction," especially, are also well conceived and helpful.

In her illuminating entry on "Jesus and Scripture," Edith Humphrey stresses the essential relationship between "the incarnate and inscribed Word." Darrell

Bock's entry on "messianism," and Daniel Trier's on "theological hermeneutics," are likewise well done. Peter Williamson adds a solid entry on Catholic biblical interpretation. Francis Martin contributes a short but highly packed article on "the spiritual sense." Robert Gagnon's article on "sexuality" is also a standout.

Among the articles on key biblical theologians, the short entry on Augustine is a little disappointing—essentially a biographical backgrounder but offering no perspective on the hermeneutical ideas and influence of this giant of the patristic era. By comparison, the dictionary allots more space to the entries on the Yale school of criticism and the "hero story." Michael Rota's treatment of Aquinas, however, is well developed. One would have thought that the seminal figure of Origen merited his own entry; however, he is treated in good articles on patristic biblical interpretation, allegory, and the spiritual sense of Scripture. One wishes, too, that the editors had chosen to consider scriptural inspiration and inerrancy in a separate article, rather than treating them in the entry on biblical authority.

Conspicuously absent is any serious appreciation of the importance and role of the liturgy and the sacraments. Or perhaps it is better to say that, in this regard, the dictionary too obviously shows its editors' Protestant and Evangelical biases. The history of interpretation, beginning within the canon itself, demonstrates that the liturgical life of the community was the privileged locus not only for hearing the biblical word, but also for its interpretation and actualization. This commonplace of historical and literary criticism, unfortunately, is nowhere reflected in the editing of this volume. It is telling that the general editor's essay on Paul Ricouer almost runs as long as the total space devoted to all topics such as liturgy and the sacraments.

It is genuinely puzzling that there are no entries on the crucial biblical-theological topics of "sacrifice" or "priesthood." Bryan Spinks' article on "liturgy," and Jeremy Begbie's on "worship," are slight, and almost seem like afterthoughts. Overlooking the pervasiveness of the liturgy and worship in both the Old and New Testaments, Spinks treats liturgy as a kind of devotional accessory that "encapsulates the good news and challenge of the holy Scriptures." Michael Horton's contribution on the sacraments treats the fifteen centuries before the Reformation in five sentences. Similarly, Graham Cole's article on the "Lord's Supper," begins, not with the ancient Jewish roots of the Eucharist, but with the debates between Luther and Zwingli.

There is much to laud in this impressive volume, which gathers between its covers some of the finest theologians and exegetes in the world today. It is a good beginning, and inspires hope that future editions will be more reflective of the full breadth of the Christian biblical and liturgical tradition.