

THEY WERE ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE?: TOWARD MINORITY BIBLICAL CRITICISM. Edited by Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia. *Semeia Studies* 57. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009. Pp. xiv + 397. \$45.95.

This collection engages the discipline of biblical criticism in terms of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and colonialism. Of its 14 contributors, five are African-American, five Asian-American, and four Latino/a. In part 1, eleven biblical scholars discuss the state of minority biblical scholarship and criticism under the subheadings "Puncturing Objectivity and Universality," "Expanding the Field," "Problematizing Criticism," and "Taking an Interdisciplinary Turn." Part 2 provides critical assessments by three external interlocutors speaking from the specialties of systematic theology, religious education, and ethnic studies. The collection concludes with a summary of key findings as well as a discussion of unresolved issues.

The resulting collection of well-written and well-argued essays is significant for three reasons. First, here a group of minority scholars, from three major racial-ethnic communities in the United States, are free to carry out biblical criticism in their own terms, that is, without the presence of and intervention from dominant racial-ethnic groups. Thus the authors more easily respond to issues and concerns raised within their own ethnic communities, as they also more easily respond from within their communities to questions from the wider society. In both tasks, they challenge and offer alternatives to the Eurocentric cast of much contemporary biblical criticism. Each contributor, however, is not left simply within his or her own separate ethnic community; the project's structure encourages collaboration across racial-ethnic lines, and thus also addresses a recurrent criticism that "groups of color rarely write across to each other; they write for themselves or white people" (14).

Second, participants' specialties and the interdisciplinary framework of their discussion allow for assessments of minority criticism from "discursive perspectives outside biblical criticism" (366), yielding results that are not only interracial and interdisciplinary, but also sophisticated, creative, and critical. They contribute valuable insights into the practices of biblical criticism, theology, religious education, and ethnic studies, resulting in reading biblical texts against the backdrop of migration, racialization and ethnicization, boundary constructions, dominant versus minority identities, exile and diaspora, as well as assimilation and resistance.

Third, the essays offer new perspectives and creative ways for understanding and engaging specific biblical texts. For example, Cheryl Anderson juxtaposes Ezra's ban on Jewish men marrying foreign women and his expulsion of all foreign women and their children with African-American experiences with racial segregation and antimiscegenation laws in the United States; she thereby challenges a dominant Eurocentric interpretation of this passage that casts it as a positive example of ethnic-religious identity construction, and offers as a coherent alternative an African-American hermeneutic that reveals the passage's dehumanizing and marginalizing

effects. Jean-Pierre Ruiz points out the futility of defending linguistic, identity, and communal boundaries, concluding that “linguistic *mestizaje/mulatez*” is inevitable and should be welcomed (93). Similarly, Ruiz juxtaposes Nehemiah’s sharp displeasure with non-Hebrew-speaking Jews who marry foreigners with Samuel Huntington’s vehement displeasure with Latinos/as who fail to learn English or assimilate into the white Anglo-Saxon ethos. Gale Yee eschews Eurocentric readings of Ruth as “an enchanting bucolic story about female empowerment and romantic heterosexual love” (127); she compares the plight of Ruth as a foreign woman who was exploited to benefit Boaz and Naomi with Asian-American women who are stigmatized, discriminated against, and exploited in the United States (e.g., as mail-order brides). She concludes that Ruth’s suffering is “an indictment of those of us who live in the First World who exploit the cheap labor of developing countries and poor immigrants” (134).

Perspectives on or by Native Americans are absent from this collection. Segovia explained that the omission was not accidental but deliberate because “the severe lack of Native American critics and the goal of equal representation among the participant groups made such presence highly problematic” (367). Nevertheless, S. acknowledged that their absence leaves the project “glaringly wanting in terms of symbolic representation within the U.S.” (ibid). I agree and hope that the next volume will address this lacuna, responding to the frustration of readers who are troubled by the absence of Native American voices.

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GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS ON THE TRINITY AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD: IN YOUR LIGHT WE SHALL SEE LIGHT. By Christopher A. Beeley. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York: Oxford University, 2008. Pp. xvi + 396. \$49.95.

Few revised doctoral dissertations, even those from Notre Dame in patristics, under Brian Daley’s direction, emerge as classics. This volume has. It belongs with the best books on Gregory written in the past 25 years. Actually, no full book on Gregory’s theology has appeared since the 1940s; and none of the earlier ones is as detailed and compelling as Beeley’s. The quality of his work is grounded in his penetrating translations and his broad learning in early Christian history and theology.

B.’s preface plainly states the centrality of the Trinity for Gregory, and the principal thesis of this book. “The doctrine of the Trinity . . . represents the fundamental origin and goal of the Christian life”; it is neither “a quasi-mathematical problem” nor “the abstract logic of the Christian God. . . . Gregory’s doctrine of the Trinity is at every point about salvation” (viii). “Gregory’s doctrine does not recognize the sort of division between knowledge and experience, theory and practice, or theology and spirituality to which many moderns are so accustomed” (x). That is why Gregory was known as “the Theologian”; much contemporary theology withers in