

suitable as a textbook for seminary-level classes, a purpose for which I have personally already used it. The high level of treatment also makes this commentary suitable for the more general reader, though this reader may find some of the semi-technical language a bit difficult in spots.

A final criticism that may be of help to the publisher for any future printings takes the form of a comment on the inferior quality of the binding on my personal copy of this book. The binding broke open at the spine after only two weeks of heavy classroom use, and this revealed that but one small spot of glue had been placed there in the binding process. The bindings of my students' books appear to have held up better; but, of course, their copies of the commentary may not have been used to the same extent as mine!

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Falk, Marcia. *Love Lyrics from the Bible: A Translation and Literary Study of the Song of Songs*. Bible and Literature Series, no. 4. Sheffield, Eng.: Almond Press, 1982 (U.S.A. Distributor: Eisenbrauns, POB 275, Winona Lake, IN 46590). 142 pp. \$19.95/\$9.95.

The substance of this delightful book, now published in revised form by Almond Press, was originally a doctoral dissertation written under Edwin Good and submitted to Stanford University in 1976. As the title indicates, it is divided into a section with the unpointed MT on left-side pages and the author's original translation on right-side pages, followed by a section with six foundational linguistic and literary essays: "Translation as a Journey"; "The Literary Structure of the Song"; "Types of Love Lyric in the Song"; "The *wasf*"; "Contexts, Themes, and Motifs"; and "Notes to Poems." A well-selected 6½-page bibliography closes the study.

The translation in its entirety, but without the Hebrew text or critical study, was published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1977 under the title *The Song of Songs: Love Poems from the Bible*. Falk calls her fresh translation "a kind of journey; a 'carrying across' from one cultural-linguistic context to another" (p. 54). Thus, the aim of her dynamic translation is for fidelity "not to isolated images, but to the meanings of images in their cultural contexts and to the effects they might have had on their earliest audience" (p. 6). In the hands of less-skilled scholars, this sort of more-subjective approach is often disastrous, but Falk achieves her purpose brilliantly. While incorporating—or at least being sensitive to—all the important insights of scholarship, both old and new, her translation has succeeded where most of her predecessors have failed: Hers reads like authentic poetry.

It should also be mentioned that whenever the Hebrew text is referred to, it is in transliteration and in word-for-word translation. Therefore, the reader does not need to know Hebrew in order to profit from a study of this publication.

As Falk notes, the only book of love poetry in the Bible has been the subject of much speculation and controversy. She does not treat it as spiritual allegory or drama, as so many commentators do, but rather as a collection of thirty-one lyric poems, all of them originally oral literature, and each with its own integrity and function. She argues that the search for structural unity necessitates a less sensitive reading of many subtle variations within the text, and alternatively, that the Song opens up most fully when viewed as a collection of several short poems. She has followed the MT with no emendations or alteration of sequence, leaving out only one verse, 6:12, as undecipherable and untranslatable. (Could it be related to Amminadab's lyric poem, also set in a garden, inscribed on an Ammonite bronze bottle, dated to the seventh century B.C.?)

Applying literary and structural analysis, Falk divides the poems on the basis of such considerations as changes in speakers, audience, setting, tones of voice, moods, arguments, etc. She finds three kinds of voices in the original: singular feminine, singular masculine, and a group of speakers. In Hebrew these are usually distinguishable grammatically, but such is not the case, of course, in English translation; hence, Falk effectively uses three different type faces to distinguish them.

Falk distinguishes the following six types of lyrics in the Song: the "love monologue" (17 poems), the "love dialogue" (6), a monologue to audience outside relationship (2), a monologue to unspecified audience (3), a dialogue between speaker and group (2), and a composite poem (1). Certain pieces of poetry have come to be known as *wasf*, an Arabic term meaning "description" and here referring to a kind of poetry that describes through a series of images the parts of the human body. Though the metaphors in the Song are traditionally difficult to interpret, Falk argues that they express a sophisticated poetic sensibility which, though foreign to us today, can be made accessible through critical analysis and by the process of visualization. Her discussions reveal patterns in the text by illuminating settings and ambiance (she calls them "contexts"), underlying attitudes and ideas ("themes"), and repeated images and symbols ("motifs").

The book deserves at least a general index, but none is provided. There is a key relating Falk's poetic divisions of the text to the traditional chapters and verses of the Bible, but the specific chapter and verse designations could have been noted unobtrusively in her own Hebrew text and English translation, and thus would greatly have facilitated comparisons. One mistake was noted on p. 127: Carmel lies *southeast* of present-day Haifa, rather than *north* of it.

The lasting value of Falk's work is that she goes one step further than all other popular English translations of the Song (including the ones that recognize the original is verse): She combines sound scholarship with what she calls "conscious poetic craft and sensibility." Her work is not a commentary, but it will be more widely usable than many of them. It is not idiosyncratic like Marvin Pope's monumental Anchor Bible volume on the Song, which interprets it as a funerary cult liturgy; nor does it have the critical depth of Roland Murphy's "Towards a Commentary on the Song of Songs" (*CBQ* 39 [1977]: 482-496). But it does sensitively portray the Song as a thoroughly non-sexist view of heterosexual love, one which affirms and celebrates mutuality where there is no male domination or female subordination or stereotyping of either sex. The book has something new to teach us about how to redeem sexuality and love in our fallen world, about a bonding which gives the individual courage to stand alone. Some after reading this book may be inspired to rejuvenate the Sephardic tradition of chanting the Song every Sabbath evening!

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Gaustad, Edwin S., ed. *A Documentary History of Religion in America: To the Civil War*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982. xx + 535 pp. Paperback, \$16.95.

Gaustad, Edwin S., ed. *A Documentary History of Religion in America: Since 1865*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983. xx + 610 pp. Paperback, \$16.95.

Edwin S. Gaustad has sifted through a massive amount of primary material to produce the most comprehensive collection of documents yet published on religion in America. Unlike its two-volume predecessor, *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents*, edited by H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher two decades ago, Gaustad's work reaches beyond the confines of the Christian tradition to represent the non-Christian as well as the Christian forces in American religious history.

Gaustad had three purposes in developing his documentary history. First, he wanted to "enable every reader to be his or her own historian" (2:xv). Operating on the assumption that the further a person moves from the documents, the less reliable the historical reconstruction, Gaustad sought to provide the "building blocks" "to enable the 'amateur' to reconstruct the religious history of America" (1:xv). While his assumption