

Fewell, Danna Nolan, ed. *Reading Between the Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*. Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation Series. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992. 285 pp. \$21.99.

Of various approaches to biblical study, reading Scripture as literature is one. *Reading Between the Texts* is part of a series, *Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation*, which uses tools from literary analysis to make scripture more accessible and to derive contemporary meaning from the text. In this volume scholars apply "intertextuality," the reading of one text in terms of another, as an interpretive grid for passages of the Hebrew Bible. This approach offers insights into textual relationships and may change the way readers think about textual production and interpretation.

Most of these essays have been a part of an ongoing dialogue in the Reading, Rhetoric, and Hebrew Bible section of the meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature. The basic assumption of the authors is that texts are related. They explore the nature of the relationships and the ways they can affect and effect meaning. Fewell includes a glossary, but most readers will still have to look up some technical words elsewhere. Competence in Hebrew is helpful but not necessary, since intertextual connections are often evident in English. Also included are a bibliography and lists of abbreviations, contributors, and biblical references.

The book's first section contains three essays which define terms and discuss ideology, theory, and method. Timothy Beal argues that the reader's ideology imposes limits on the text and that either reader or writer might utilize strategies to support or undermine certain ideologies. He raises questions about whether boundaries ought to be maintained around text or to what extent such boundaries may be usefully "transgressed" in order to discover new relationships or to give priority to previously unheard voices in the text.

In light of this, the authors have particular interest in bringing to the foreground concepts found in connections between and within the text, possibly not otherwise in evidence. Some issues addressed include the way the biblical writer's audience may or may not have understood the use of irony or contrast in the text, the writer's portrayal of YHWH, the treatment of women in the stories and by story writers, and the ways prophets interpreted and reinterpreted, making new literary uses of their oral traditions.

Ilona Rashkow demonstrates intertextual interpretation by analyzing the relationship between the text and the reader of Gen 12 and Gen 20. She claims that these two similar stories intensify each other, exposing Abraham's doubt of God, his possible hope of material gain, and revealing a narrative style of contrasting participant speeches to create in the reader discomfort about Abraham's behavior. The discomfort occurs upon reading of Abraham's exploitation of Sarah and his lies to Pharaoh and Abimelech. The writer appears to contrast Abraham's lack of concern for Sarah, a powerless possession, with Abraham's concern for his own safety, emphasizing this through the contrast of Abraham's words with the impassioned rebukes by Pharaoh and Abimelech. Rashkow shows that the manner of writing also focuses attention on the

recurring Genesis theme of the matriarch in danger. In the spirit of intertextual interpretation this could be taken further to show that these nuances of writing reveal God's protective concern both for the women in these stories and for the alien or Gentile figures, themes all too often ignored by readers.

The second section of the book considers selected texts from the Genesis-Kings corpus. Essays in this section examine possible links of meaning between stories, such as the theme of hospitality in the stories of Rahab and Lot. One essay focuses on a reading of I Kgs 12 and contrasts the intentions of the historical Jeroboam with the possible intentions of a literary Jeroboam created by the writer to discuss actions and consequences. Another essay explores the account of the fall of Ahab's house through the ancient metaphor of carnival.

The book's third section brings together texts from various parts of the Hebrew Bible. The ideology of this section may be illustrated through Ellen Davis's analysis of the possibly chance use of a term in two dissimilar passages. This article focuses on the stories of Jacob and Job. Both men are called *ish tam* (man of integrity), and from this term Davis suggests a reading of Jacob's story which points to his gradual growth into wisdom and eventual trust in God to yet insure his high destiny. Davis concludes that while Job models an example of suffering and persistent faith to exilic Israel, the textual tie of "integrity" provides an opportunity for illuminating the puzzling character of Jacob. At a time when Israel searched her history of relationship with God for clues about disaster and hope, such an understanding could mirror their hope that God would recognize their belated maturity and still keep them as a chosen nation.

This is a useful, if subjective, reading. Questions which can be asked include whether the same meaning or another is derived by reversing the order of comparison. What, if anything, is revealed by using Jacob to illuminate Job? How does such an interpretation avoid special pleading? These questions may be asked of any comparative interpretation. The intertextual approach requires the reader to ask them specifically. The authors are explicit about identifying their own ideologies; this assists readers in their own analysis of the success or failure of the method in each particular case. It also reinforces the cautionary comments by the editor and the authors of the first-section essays.

While the authors make claims for the legitimacy of their particular approach, they often raise as many questions as they presume to answer. In a number of cases the authors' intertextual approach functions to deconstruct a conventional interpretation and, while suggesting an alternative view, seems more interested in the possibilities for interpretation than in establishing a definitive meaning.

The intertextual approach raises other questions. Conclusions may be reached because they are relevant to current interests. How valid are such conclusions? The shaping of result by particular interest is a subjective methodology. What tests can the reader apply to measure applicability of either the method or its result? The book would make its case more strongly for this interpretive method had it addressed these questions in a more substantive way.

The intertextual approach assumes that Bible authors used words, themes, and structures in rich, purposeful ways. While it is certainly a mistake to view these writers as simple scribes, unaware of what they wrote or how they wrote it, how much freedom may be accorded to the reader beholding this literary wealth? It must be noted that limiting excess lies more with the individual reader than with the discipline or method itself. This type of study requires a certain type of mind that sees connections which may elude others, or may only be appreciated by a similar mind. The value of this method for individual readers will probably depend on their interest in both careful reading and its potential results for theological enterprise.

As a whole, this book demonstrates that the biblical text will yield many clues to meaning for the reader who can evaluate such features as irony, allusion, theme, and narrative and linguistic parallels, as well as the biblical authors' appreciation of their own narrative traditions. Those scholars will be amply rewarded who become progressively more discerning about the textual richness of the Bible.

I recommend *Reading Between the Texts* as a stimulus to tapping possibilities for contemporary biblical study. I recognize, however, that some readers may have reservations about interpretations that may be overstated. Most will find the book technically challenging, since the writers presume some expertise in literary and rhetorical analysis.

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Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*. Proclamation Commentaries, ed. Gerhard Krodel. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. 160 pp. \$9.95.

Most scholars interested in the Apocalypse are familiar with Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's short commentary entitled *Invitation to the Book of Revelation*, published by Image Books in 1981. When Fortress Press expressed an interest in publishing an updated version of that commentary, Fiorenza discovered that the considerable development in her thinking on the Apocalypse in the intervening period made minimal revisions an impossibility. The result is not just a new commentary in the old format, but an entirely new style of commentary.

Commentaries tend to take one of two approaches. One approach is the "historical-critical" commentary, which seeks to elucidate what the text meant in its original context with as much scientific objectivity and disinterestedness as possible. In the process, issues of theological interest and the church's need for sound biblical preaching are often marginalized or ignored. The other approach aims at the preacher or lay reader, using the text as a springboard for addressing current concerns, but usually failing to grapple meaningfully with the text in its original situation. In her commentary Fiorenza seeks to be as