

Boring, M. Eugene, Klaus Berger, and Carsten Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. 633 pp. Hardcover, \$69.95.

The *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* is the end product of several scholarly works. Its foundation was from Wilhelm Richmann's (Göttingen) comprehensive collection and translation of Hellenistic texts. These texts were then employed by Klaus Berger (Heidelberg) and Carsten Colpe (Berlin) in a more useful way by expanding, adapting, and annotating them in the famous *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Neuen Testament*. The commentary under review became the crowning act of these works, presented in the most usable, practical, functional, and complete form available at this time.

This commentary, in the first instance, conveys a scholarly bearing. It is edited by three eminent scholars reputed for their expertise in Hellenistic research. There are two editions, the English and the German. Boring, the chief editor and translator of the English edition (the edition under review) has made some constructive changes and additions to the German collection. His major contribution to this work is his inclusion of Hellenistic texts that illuminate exegetical and hermeneutical issues which impact theological ideas, as different from the texts of Berger and Colpe in *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Neuen Testament*, whose selections are based upon history-of-religions concerns. Berger and Colpe confined the texts to predominantly pagan sources and rejected texts rated as familiar from standard collections, whereas Boring includes Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic texts. The original introduction to the German edition (19-32) provides categories that can help the student cull interpretive insights as he or she interacts with the texts.

The most outstanding feature of this commentary is the relatively quick and easy search one can make of Hellenistic texts that give interpretive insights on any particular canonical text. In addition, the canonical text is in the same chronological order as that of any familiar translation of the NT. Just to thumb through its user-friendly pages can be of tremendous value, not to mention the enormous wealth of information about the NT world to be gleaned when the volume is studied systematically and purposefully. For instance, a search on Matt 1:1-25 and its parallels immediately reveals three corresponding Hellenistic texts—§1 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, "Plato" 3.1-2, 45; §2 Iamblicus, *The Life of Pythagoras* 2.3-5; and §3 Diordorus Siculus, *Library of History* 4.9.1-10. Consulting the Scripture Index to discover other texts relevant to the passage under study would lead to §§5, 321, 4, 755, 9, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. This easy approach in locating corresponding Hellenistic texts is a distinct advantage over trying to locate them by date, topic or author.

Should one choose to do a search by topic, the Subject Index lists canonical and noncanonical texts. For instance, a search on the topic "meals" will send the student to §§194, 195, 346, 688, and 689, including topics from "eating" to "Eucharist." The Ancient Author Index establishes points of contact between passages in the biblical text and the Hellenistic. The number of Hellenistic citations and their corresponding locations foster interesting impressions about

NT times—for example, Celsus: *Medicine*, §76, and *True Doctrine*, §623; Quintilian: *Declamatio*, §331; and 1 Enoch §§137, 805, 920.

The book includes more than a thousand primary references to Hellenistic texts, arranged in the order of the canonical texts they illuminate. First, in large bold type, the canonical text is given with its corresponding parallels—e.g., Matt 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, John 6:15-21. Then, the title of the relevant Hellenistic text is printed in smaller bold type, under which its contents are presented in normal font size. The Hellenistic citation's relevance to the canonical text is then elaborated upon in the annotation, which is cast in a small 10-point font. This decreasing font size in headers and sections displays an orderly format that is both functional and attractive.

My only reservations to this production are (1) its title and (2) its annotated comments. First, some of the so-called "Hellenistic texts" used are beyond third-century C.E. productions: "Inscriptions from Epidauros" (late fourth-century C.E.), Midrash Debarim Rabba (developed from 450 to 800 C.E.), Berekoth 4:1 (600 C.E.), etc. These late works may be too far removed from Hellenistic times to accurately illuminate the NT text. Around 300 C.E. may be deemed a reasonable cut-off point for the selection of sources. Second, while Boring, in his introduction, disclaims any intention that his annotations are definitive (15), the fact remains that the student will still be influenced by Boring's predisposition to pursue his "theological exegesis" (15). This caution is relevant, inasmuch as the Hellenistic texts are not presented in their entirety. There is a certain danger in citing only small segments of a given work. There is the probability that Boring's "theological exegesis" could have been pursued by the dictates of personal influence, "parallelomania," or noncontextual analyses. Apart from these two reservations this commentary is an important exegetical tool for the NT scholar.

Because the message of the NT is rooted in the language, thought patterns, and cultural presuppositions of the time, place, and circumstance in which it was written, noncanonical, primary sources contemporary with that time often offer surprising new insights into Scripture. As Keck puts it, "Even a smell of a primary source is better than a shelf of secondary sources" (11). The richness and versatility of this collection of Hellenistic texts make it an essential for the NT scholar.

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Collier-Thomas, Bettye. *Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998. xx + 345 pp. Cloth, \$45.00.

The genius of the African-American preacher is legendary. Long before African-American preachers were officially recognized or sanctioned, their messages of hope and courage inspired the battered African-American community to press on, in spite of the odds. Known for their ability to "tell the story," these African-American preachers wielded empowering influences that were felt well beyond the precincts of their parishes. Unfortunately, students of African-American pastors and preaching have generally tended to view the enterprise as one reserved for males only.