

Westminster, 1984], 61-76). In part II some articles on poetry may lack the depth which their recommendation suggests (e.g., two cited at item #516, 117). On Psalms, notwithstanding his layman's disclaimers, C. S. Lewis' *Reflections on the Psalms* fits wonderfully and qualitatively into the category called "Other."

Negligible, but significant, typographical miscues compare Murphy O'Connor (#533) with Kugel (#534) instead of with Kugel (#535) on technical arguments against notions of meter and parallelism in Hebrew poetry; McDaniel (#762) with Kaiser (#773), on Sumerian influence upon Lamentations, instead of with Gwaltney (#775) who, in turn, is mistakenly contrasted with Gurewicz (#761) instead of with McDaniel (#762). Bosman (#781), on structural analysis of Lamentations, is cross-referenced to Moore (#776), rather than to Renkema (#778). Then, there is the inconsistent transliteration of Hebrew terms (cf. #20, #153, #168). Beyond these, the mischief of printer's devils is limited enough to quickly cite: Elihu "a spokesmen" instead of "spokesman" (88), "Contique" for "Cantique" (156), and page header "Lamations" for "Lamentations" (161, 163).

But these are trivia, insufficient to detract from Enns', IBR's, and Baker Books' service to OT scholarship. Because of their work, OT wisdom and poetry research now possesses a very useful survey, and is certain to profit again when its sequel appears in five years' time.

Andrews University

LAEL CAESAR

Farley, Wendy. *Eros for the Other: Retaining Truth in a Pluralistic World*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996. viii + 220 pp. Index. Hardcover, \$45.00.

For many people, postmodernism and pluralism seem deeply inhospitable to truth. Relativism, if not nihilism, seems like a disturbingly common outcome of attachment to postmodern thought. Any approach to life that renders us unable to protest the torture of children, the rape of the land, the degradation of women, the random dissolutions of families, or the proliferation of warfare, terrorism, and gang violence is worth rejecting. If every option is acceptable from someone's perspective, then we have no way of resisting evil. And, if the inability to resist evil is the price of endorsing postmodernism, it is too high a price to pay.

"Postmodernism" is a notoriously fluid term. But what all the varieties of postmodernism have in common is their rejection of the Enlightenment as a final resting place for human thought. Enlightenment thinkers believed that the post-Reformation religious conflicts that claimed so many lives could be avoided if people could find a basis for moral action and political choice that was independent of religious convictions. Because religious disagreement lay at the root of so much violence, it would be impossible to avoid this violence by appealing to religious convictions which were themselves in dispute. What was needed instead, said the thinkers of the Enlightenment, was an account of normative judgment that exhibited the rationality people believed was typical of science. On the basis of such an account, it would be possible to craft moral and political standards that would appeal to people whatever their religious beliefs. As a result, social harmony would be possible despite profound religious disagreement.

It was in many ways an attractive notion. The problem was that it was incorrect. The foundations on the basis of which Enlightenment thinkers tried to base morality and politics proved to be very thin ones. The assumptions on which all rational people would supposedly have to agree were few in number and not very substantial. The moral and political judgments Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers often sought to defend seemed to depend on beliefs about the nature of humanness and the place of human beings in the world that were anything but obvious to "all rational people." Understood in the limited way required by the Enlightenment project, reason turned out to be compatible with a wide range of worldviews.

One way of understanding postmodernism is to see it as a response to this realization. The kind of postmodernism that has received the most press is what I call "anarchic" postmodernism. This variety of postmodernism responds to the failure of the Enlightenment project by announcing—whether enthusiastically or dolefully—that there simply are no persuasive reasons to adopt one belief or course of action in preference to another. Anarchic postmodernism celebrates the chaos of contemporary life.

It is obvious that this sort of postmodernism is an attractive option only for a very limited number of people. If you are materially comfortable, free from conflict and stress, and able to contemplate radical transformations in your private or public world without being affected by them, you may find it possible to be entertained by chaotic multiplicity. Anarchic postmodernism is an attractive philosophy for aesthetes. But, of course, it is bad news for people who are hurting. Those who are materially or spiritually oppressed can hardly believe that they are in no better position than their oppressors to evaluate their circumstances. If you are interned in a concentration camp, trapped in an abusive marriage, or vilified as a member of a pariah group by the media, the notion that your oppressors' perspective is just as good as yours will hardly prove a source of comfort. It will cut the nerve of responsible action, in all likelihood inducing a fatalistic and hopeless response to your situation.

In *Eros for the Other*, Wendy Farley attempts to articulate a very different sort of postmodernism—one that is very serious indeed about truth. For Farley, postmodernism has been right to reject simplistic, unitary understandings of reality. Things are a good deal more complicated than Enlightenment or pre-Enlightenment thinkers supposed. But the right response is not to reject the idea of truth. It is to recognize that we discover the truth not by reducing all of reality to a single pattern or structure, but by attending to everything we encounter in its beautiful and often surprising particularity.

The practical point here is that when we pay attention to what is other than ourselves, we will often be unsettled. When we really look at another person, another practice, another idea, another culture, we may find that what we thought was obvious and universal is neither. But the right conclusion is not to abandon the notion of truth in favor of a philosophy of "anything goes." But what will keep us in touch with reality, and so with truth, Farley argues, is not an *a priori* understanding that ignores the details of the reality we actually encounter, but a sensitive and responsive engagement with the otherness of things. This kind of engagement will sometimes lead to disturbing consequences. Because, however, it

is always anchored to the irreducible reality of the other, it can never lead to the smug lack of concern with truth that typifies anarchic postmodernism.

Farley notes the ways in which an emphasis on totality—on the definitive nature of a single theory, a single metaphysic, a single understanding of rationality or humanness—can suppress the truth and oppress people. Again, this is not because there isn't a fact of the matter about things. It is because the systems we use to organize our understanding of reality always fall short of the glorious complexity of reality itself. When we try to force-fit reality to our systems—a perfect instance of idolatry—we ignore the way in which this makes our theoretical constructs and our limited assumptions more important than the truth.

This emphasis on otherness is not just a point about truth in the abstract. Though Farley is a Christian theologian, she draws on the work of such Jewish thinkers as Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt. Her work embodies a characteristically Jewish sense that truth is something to be done, and not merely contemplated. To acknowledge the reality of something other than oneself is to do it justice. The epistemological stance bonds seamlessly with the moral and political one: moral action begins with the recognition of the independent reality and value of the other, Arendt's irreducibility to my own plans and projects and purposes.

The *eros* of Farley's title is the stance toward otherness she believes a full recognition of its reality entails. We feel the tug of *eros* when we are drawn toward something other, not because of its usefulness, but because of its inherent beauty—not the sort of beauty that some things have and others lack, but the beauty that comes as a concomitant of being unique and irreplaceable, the beauty that comes from being at all—and its intrinsic worth. *Eros*—she uses the term in its most general sense, not with any narrow reference to erotic love—seeks otherness, desires otherness, while at the same time preserving it; *eros* cannot eliminate the other without extinguishing itself. Whether we seek truth as scientists, philosophers, theologians, or historians, or whether we are responding to the particularity of other creatures, we ought, Farley argues, to exhibit an *eros* that delights in and respects their difference from ourselves.

While defending the absolute importance of the particular, Farley does not suggest that we can dispense with general categories. There is no way to think without organizing and patterning our intellectual worlds. She argues for a careful appropriation of the traditional Platonic notion of Ideas. (Where many contemporary thinkers read Plato as ignoring particularity in favor of ideas that we would regard as abstractions and generalizations, Farley argues that Platonic thought is, in fact, highly sensitive to the distinct reality of actual persons and objects.) Platonic "forms . . . provide a norm by which we can engage in a moral struggle to draw down justice, beauty, wisdom, and wonder into historical existence. The immutability of the forms . . . is required . . . to provide a moral standard that does not dissolve into the exigencies of might" (132). If flux and change were the only truth, goodness might turn into evil, the truth of today into tomorrow's falsehood. We need general truths and categories, and there are such truths and categories that answer to our need. But, Farley suggests, we need an understanding of ideas that is consistent with our recognition of the importance of particularity, an understanding she undertakes to provide.

As a woman sensitive to women's experience, Farley is aware that the idea or category of "woman" has sometimes been employed oppressively to obliterate the differences between individual women and diverse groups of women. There is a great deal of suspicion among contemporary thinkers regarding the aptness of speaking of womanhood as a category or of purporting to identify the essence of what it means to be a woman. Such efforts have been criticized as treating the experiences and needs of all women as identical without regard to historical location, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. But Farley argues that a nuanced understanding of ideas allows us to continue speaking of the idea of woman, and so unite women in what are often common struggles.

Farley concludes *Eros for the Other* with a summation that emphasizes her concern for patient attentiveness to the reality of other beings, and of the challenges and joys associated with such attentiveness. "We are called to reality," she says, "by its beauty, by our obligations to it, by the high price we pay for our illusions." To be sure, the "plurality and ambiguity of our world call us to a vigilant renunciation of totality, of possession, of presence." We cannot pretend to know or to control everything. "But the face of the other, the beauty and vulnerability of nature, calls us to responsibility. *Eros* traverses the distance between renunciation and responsibility. If only we could forgo pornographies of truth and find the courage to subsist in this tension, to embrace the insecurities and delights of a ceaseless desire for truth" (200).

Unsurprisingly, *Eros for the Other* is not a program. It is a sketch of a set of problems, together with a number of pointers toward solutions. What is crucial for Farley is holding on to the reality of what is other than the self. As she develops her argument, she displays a clear and attractive alternative to Enlightenment universalism and to anarchic postmodernism's disregard for truth and justice. Which is not to say that she has solved all of the problems she addresses.

Much of Farley's argument is pitched at a highly abstract level. Though she is, as I say, a Christian theologian, she writes in this book—by contrast with her earlier *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*—largely as a philosopher. There is nothing wrong with that. But it leads her, I think, to pay less attention than she might to the distinctive value of particular historical traditions in suggesting and warranting the claims we make as we respond to the reality of otherness. The problem of justification lurks in the background of her argument. I suspect it would have been stronger had she attended more explicitly to the ways in which particular traditions—and especially the Christian tradition—might provide us with criteria for identifying just what is to count as injustice and oppression, since, as she acknowledges, such identifications are not unproblematic. I suspect she fails to do so because of her concern with the idolatrous pretensions of traditions and systems of thought, which can tend often enough to obscure otherness. Nonetheless, her position would perhaps have been more complete had she explored their relevance more fully in her beautifully written book.

*Eros for the Other* does not provide the only post-Enlightenment alternative to anarchic postmodernism. The explicit attention to community for which I have argued has been a constitutive feature of the work of such authors as Alasdair MacIntyre, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and William Placher, and also surfaces in

helpful ways in the work of Jeffrey Stout. Farley's book is perhaps best read in conjunction with Placher's *Unapologetic Theology* or Wolterstorff's *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*. Having said this, however, I have no hesitation in recommending *Eros for the Other* as a source of useful insights and illuminating proposals that will enable its readers to be humble in the face of difference and passionate in their pursuit of truth.

La Sierra University  
Riverside, CA 92515-8247

GARY CHARTIER

Finegan, Jack. *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998. 426 pp. Hardcover, \$34.95.

The first edition of this work was published by Princeton University Press in 1964, and it soon became a standard reference work. It contains a wealth of information about how the ancients kept their chronological records. However, in the first edition, the section on Old Testament chronology was very brief, covering only 19 pages. The section on NT chronology, on the other hand, went into the various aspects of that subject in almost infinite detail. This imbalance has been corrected in the new, revised edition. The section on OT chronology now covers 75 pages (195-269).

Finegan has entered into an extensive dialogue with the literature published since 1964, and he includes even more detail in the section on NT chronology. As a result, Finegan has changed his mind on some of the conclusions he reached in his first work. In the first edition, Finegan dated the birth of Jesus to 5/4 B.C., but now he has moved to 3/2 B.C. as the most likely date of his birth. As a result, his dates for the ministry and death of Jesus have changed. In the first edition, Finegan dated the beginning of Jesus' ministry, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, to 26/27 A.D. on the basis of the two-year co-regency between Augustus and Tiberius. He has now abandoned that earlier date in favor of 29 A.D., dating from the death of Augustus in 14 A.D. This has necessitated moving the date of Jesus' death from 30 A.D., in the first edition, to 33 A.D. in the present study. One can only admire Professor Finegan's openness to consider new data and interpretations and to incorporate them into his new chronological scheme.

The revised volume has four new sections that were not in the previous edition. Archaeological and Egyptological tables for chronology have been added (xxxv-xxxvii), and standard dates are given there. He does not decide between the high, middle, or low chronologies for Egypt, but simply gives the dates as a range. An extensive new section on Sabbatical Years, Jubilees, and Priestly Courses has been added (116-138). For the Sabbatical Years, Finegan has printed the tables of Zuckerman (seconded by Blosser) and Wacholder side by side (they differ by one year). Finegan favors the older system of Zuckerman, which runs a year earlier for its dates than Wacholder's. No definite date for any Jubilee is known in biblical or extrabiblical text; however, Finegan discusses a Qumran fragment for a possible application of one. He makes extensive use of chronological references from Qumran texts. Readers may be interested to know that one of these appears to give the length of time from Creation to the Exodus as 11,536 years.

When it comes to OT chronology, the major new addition in this edition,