

Many of my Bible students are moderate Calvinists. When they heard this authoritative quotation and realized the implications, they were dismayed. This is not the jingoistic assurance their pastors taught them.

Geisler offers some explanations that are useful for reconciling foreknowledge with free will. First, a great example. Imagine an M.Div. student who feels he'd better get married, because he'll soon be a pastor. There are actually two girls he's been seeing off and on. Both are lovely, talented, and would make good wives for a pastor. He loves them both. He's heard through the grapevine that one girl likes him, but she doesn't want to marry him. He's heard through the same grapevine that the other girl has been seen kissing his photo and drawing hearts around his initials. To which girl will he propose? Geisler says that's how it is with God. He *loves* everyone, but he *knows* who will say yes and *elects* to save them, and only them.

Second, if God *knows* who will say yes and *elects* to save them, and only them, then why did Christ die for everyone? Why is the Holy Spirit still active in those who will be lost? Why should we work to bring the lost to Christ, since Christ knows those who are his and will save them regardless? In essence, Geisler's answer is that God is bound to continual action by his own foreknowledge. He has to do what he foresees himself doing so that those he foresees accepting salvation will in fact accept it. He knows that even though the Holy Spirit works on Bill until the moment of Bill's death, Bill will continue to refuse salvation. However, God only knows what must and will be, so it is imperative that this actually come to pass. God doesn't say, "I know that *if* I worked on Bill all his life he would still say no, so I'm not going to waste my time." In the judgment Bill might say that wasn't fair. Instead, God knows that he actually will work on Bill and Bill actually will refuse his grace. But he goes ahead and works on Bill anyway.

It really is wonderful that grace should be poured out on those who will always refuse it. It's as if a mother knows her son is a criminal at heart, who will desert her and die in prison, yet in spite of this and because of this she continues to lavish her love on him, because the time is so short and he's her son. Then too, because of that grace there are times when even the most wicked can be led to do God's will, as when an evil customs official, to his own bewilderment, lets a truckload of Bibles past his borders. For me, these insights alone were worth the cost of the book.

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ED CHRISTIAN

Greenspahn, Frederick E. *An Introduction to Aramaic*. SBL Resources for Biblical Study, no. 38. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999. xi + 230 pp. Paperback, \$54.95.

Formerly, a teacher of Biblical Aramaic had a choice of only two standard textbooks in English (Franz Rosenthal's *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* and Alger F. Johns's *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*). Thanks to Greenspahn's *An Introduction to Aramaic*, that number has now grown to three. Rather than intending to supplant the first two, the author's desire is to prepare students to use the existing textbooks "easily and profitably" (xi).

The main thrust of this book is not academic but pedagogic, since it was not intended to be a reference grammar but "a kind of workbook, organized around

the Aramaic passages from the Bible" (x). The book consists of thirty-two chapters, each of which deals briefly with an aspect of the introductory, grammatical, and syntactical nature of Aramaic, and each chapter also includes a text in Aramaic for reading, translation, and analysis. The first twenty-seven chapters focus on the Aramaic words and texts found in the Bible in both OT and NT. The remaining chapters introduce a whole range of extrabiblical texts, beginning with Old Aramaic and ending with texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Midrashim, and the Targumim. The chapter entitled "Afterword" introduces a number of tools that are available for further studies in Aramaic, and presents several paradigms listing nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals, and verbs. There is an Aramaic-English glossary at the end of the book.

Aramaic is introduced in this textbook "as if it were a dialect of Hebrew" (ix). This is because Greenspahn is convinced that the student of Biblical Aramaic is most often motivated by an interest in the Bible and can better appreciate Biblical Hebrew because "we can see things better with two eyes" (2). Several chapters explain the grammatical features of Biblical Aramaic by dealing first with the corresponding phenomena in Biblical Hebrew and then proceeding to the Aramaic material. Thus, unlike Rosenthal's grammar, this textbook presupposes a student's knowledge of Biblical Hebrew. Most students will find this approach helpful, especially in the sections that deal with the vocabulary of each lesson where the author consistently lists the corresponding Hebrew words alongside the Aramaic words and their English translations.

Exercises in this textbook are many and helpful. This is a new feature for a textbook on Biblical Aramaic. Some exercises deal with morphology and syntax, while others focus on translation from Aramaic to English and vice-versa. In the case of the extrabiblical texts the vowel pointing from Biblical Aramaic is suggested. Considering the number of exercises prepared by the author, one gains the strong impression that this is more than just a textbook; it is a workbook based on long-term teaching experience.

There is little doubt that Greenspahn deserves high commendation for this work. The book is reader-friendly, well organized, and informative. A few things could be improved. No mention is made of the Tell Fekheriye Inscription, a lengthy and valuable text in Old Aramaic. In the exercises there are many sentences for the student to translate from English into Aramaic, yet no English-Aramaic glossary is provided at the end of the book. Lastly it would be of great help if the Aramaic-English glossary could contain all of the words attested in Biblical Aramaic.

In conclusion, this textbook is a welcome addition, and I strongly recommend its use in teaching beginning Aramaic.

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Hayes, John Haralson. *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 2 vols.: A-J, K-Z. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 1408 pp. Hardcover, \$200.00.

The art of biblical interpretation is an ever-expanding discipline with various traditions and multiple approaches, some fairly recent, and others centuries-old. This has led, among other things, to a surge of technical terms and to an ever-widening range