

Beginning with the turmoil of sixteenth-century Europe, Lilla traces the leading thinkers of the Western tradition through Hobbs, Hume and Locke, Kant, Rousseau and beyond, concluding that two world wars caused a severe dissolution of rationalism. He underscores the fact that the twenty-first century began with a conflict between worldviews, specifically those of fundamentalists, who understood political theology to be derived from divinely revealed documents and who had little or no tolerance for other views, and those who espoused a liberal, rational, humanistic political theology that was tolerant of others and sought accommodation.

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 signaled yet another significant shift in Western influence. Prior to this date, Westerners could still delude themselves into thinking that their rational worldview was sufficient, although the mass migration from East to West and South to North was forcing them to come to grips with the need for understanding the “other” (Islam in particular). September 11 brought the West face to face with its lack of understanding, vastly accelerating the pace of Western rationalistic dissolution. The need for understanding the “other” thus becomes expedient, especially for the West.

While Lilla avoids stating the obvious, he leads his readers to see the emptiness of a rational-liberal approach and the barrenness and futility of liberal political theology and its “stillborn god.” Is it one of the (unconscious?) aims of liberalism to so domesticate God that he becomes the god of the status quo or the god of one’s own political ambitions? Lilla believes this to be the case. He notes that the chief mechanism for reducing God to a theopolitical statement is a process of “reinterpreting biblical faith as an expression of human religious consciousness and social interaction rather than as a revelation from God” (300).

Lilla is intent on developing a thorough history of Western rational thought, although at times he seems to become lost in a literary and philosophical rabbit warren. The reason for this weakness is that he attempts to cover too much territory in such a small volume. In spite of this, he is able to communicate a large picture in a few words. Readers who desire more detail and elaboration will have to seek elsewhere.

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MacCarty, Skip. *In Granite or Ingrained? What the Old and New Testaments Reveal about the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath*. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2007. 327 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

As an associate pastor for evangelism at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University, Skip MacCarty offers a major contribution to the study of the biblical covenants and a practical help to all who need clarity on this central theme of the Bible. The author soon clears up his somewhat mystifying title when he speaks about “the granite of a stony heart” and an obedience to God that is “ingrained in the person’s very nature” (29). He then applies this biblical image to the two levels of Israel’s acceptance of the

holy law of the Sinai covenant: “to be ingrained in the hearts of His people, not just inscribed in granite” (41). Later this metaphor is enlarged by “the regenerating work of His Spirit, who alone can ingrain the divine law in the heart of faith” (85). MacCarty’s key concept is his distinction between the historical and experiential dimensions of the old and new covenants, which he uses to interpret the more controversial passages in the NT, particularly Paul’s letters (see chaps. 6–8).

The author’s theological structure is based on the concept that God’s covenants with humanity “emanated from the everlasting, primordial covenant of love that existed within the Trinity and embraces all of God’s creation” (91). This idea forms the underpinning for the assumption of the spiritual unity and harmony of the biblical covenants, which were revealed progressively in history as expressions of God’s heavenly covenant of redemption.

MacCarty identifies four so-called “DNA markers” that are present in each covenant: “fully grace-based, gospel-bearing, faith-inducing, mission-directed revelation of God’s covenant of redemption/plan of salvation” (77). MacCarty never tires of demonstrating these markers in both the OT and NT, along with the various historical contexts and transitions. His apologetic purpose becomes more evident in his treatment of the controversial passages in Paul’s letters: Acts 15:10; Rom 6:14 and 10:4; 2 Cor 3; Gal 3:22-25; and 1 Tim 1:8-9 (see chap. 7). Here MacCarty emphasizes that the two covenants in the NT represent “two contrasting responses to God’s grace. Both are human experiences that have existed side by side from the time of Cain and Abel to this very day” (99). The writer occasionally uses some unnamed opponents as his contrasting foil, referring to “the contentions of some,” identifying these in his endnotes only as those of D. Ratzlaff (see chap. 8). But quotes are never presented, and no room is given to represent his opponent’s view in his own context of interpretation.

Chapter 9 deals with the “Covenant Signs”: rainbow, circumcision, and the Sabbath. The writer concludes from Col. 2:11-12 that the “everlasting covenant” of circumcision (Gen 17:13) “appears to have been replaced by the NT ceremony of baptism” (176). Surprisingly, he proposes the rather rationalistic reason for this transition was because the act of circumcision “had become so laden with legalistic overtones that it had to be discarded as a covenant sign” (176). He concludes “that the NT clearly states that the physical act of circumcision no longer serves as a covenant sign” (177). The decision of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 that restricted the freedom from circumcision exclusively to Gentile believers is completely overlooked, as well as the specific focus on the freedom of Gentile believers in the epistle to the Galatians. Contextual exegesis is overshadowed by the hermeneutical concern that “the issue in the NT is not circumcision or no circumcision but a new covenant experience versus an old covenant experience” (178). The extensive treatment of the Sabbath, including the controversial texts Rom 14:5 and Col 2:16-17, is stimulating because “a number of scholars” are now introduced mostly to support the interpretation that Paul attacks “a legalistic, heartless observance of religious ritual rather than an attack on the ritual itself” (193).

Assessing MacCarty's perspective on the biblical covenants, note that his defense of the unity of all divine covenants is based on his premise of their so-called "emanation" from an inner-trinitarian, primordial covenant or plan of redemption. The author was motivated to study the covenants when he read some (unnamed) book of an antinomian view of the new covenant, a study in which "most commentaries didn't help much. And some just added to my confusion" (xiii). His major concern was his personal and pastoral burden to defend his conviction about the unity of God's plan of salvation and of the two Testaments.

Every apologetic purpose tends to cause some one-sidedness in interpreting Scripture at the cost of an objective exegesis of texts within their particular historical and literary contexts. MacCarty has tried to overcome this tendency to a dogmatic exegesis by stressing the historical progression of divine revelation in the two Testaments, in which he acknowledges that Jesus' "advent is the epicenter of history" (64). This makes the surprise greater as to why the writer does not give proper attention to the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7), the new focal point of the Mosaic covenant (the Royal Psalms), the very center of Israel's Messianic promise, which finds regular emphasis in the NT as the "Gospel of the Kingdom" (see Gabriel's announcement in Luke 1:32-33; Matt 24:14; 1 Cor 15:25; Rev 5:5; 11:11-21). This lacuna is, however, characteristic of the Adventist tradition. A striking exception of MacCarty's effort to do justice to the context can be observed in his brief comments on Jesus' words in Matt 5:48: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Dissecting these words from their inalienable context (5:43-48), he comments: "The fact is, it's a perfection beyond our ability to comprehend" (128-129). Here Bible commentaries (and E. G. White) could have saved him from his philosophical approach and excursion into sinless perfection that Jesus alone possessed. The point of Jesus is not the "imputed" righteousness, but rather the unconditional love that God constantly exhibits to both the righteous and the unrighteous (see Matt 5:43-47), and which Jesus now says should "therefore" be demonstrated by all God's children in their own sphere (v. 48). On the other hand, a stimulating exegesis is given in the extensive treatment of the controversial text John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (NIV; 50-53). Here MacCarty convincingly explains from the immediate context that Jesus is "the source of both the continuity and continuing progression of the revelation of God's grace given through the ages . . . expressed most fully up to that point in the revelation of His grace made in 'the law'" (51-52).

Regarding the Sabbath as "God's enduring covenant sign," the writer insists that worshiping God on the seventh day of the week does not represent legalism and spiritual bondage, but is rather designed by the Creator "to deliver God's covenant people from workaholic and to contribute toward the . . . new covenant experience that finds its greatest joy and freedom in God" (205). The book concludes with an important chapter (10) on "Covenant Rest," based on Heb 3-4, where "God's rest is equated with the gospel." Due

recognition is also given to the future consummation of the new covenant promises (chap. 11).

The section on the four directives of the Jerusalem Council for the Gentile believers in Acts 15:28-29, in which the four laws of Moses in Lev 17-18 for the Gentiles are repeated, is illuminating (197-199). The book contains four appendices, including one of tables and charts that summarize and clarify the issues of the old and new covenants in both Testaments.

The book has remarkably few typos: on p. 46 the word “though” should be “through” (line 10 from bottom); on p. 180 the word “to” is superfluous (line 8 from top); endnote 3 on p. 243 is not indicated within the text itself. The title of LaRondelle’s book on the covenants is not “Our Great Redeemer” (73 and 243) but “Our Creator Redeemer” (as correctly on p. 55).

This new book on God’s covenants serves its purpose to educate and to edify its readers and is sincerely recommended as a valuable advance in the search for a better understanding of the Scriptures. Andrews University Press can be commended for publishing two books on the biblical covenants within two years.

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Malbran-Labat, Florence. *La morphologie akkadienne en tableaux. Langues et cultures anciennes*, 8. Bruxelles: Éditions Safran, 2007. 80 pp. Paper, €28,00.

Malbran-Labat is probably best known for the expanded edition of René Labat’s list of Akkadian signs, i.e., René Labat and Florence Malbran-Labat, *Manuel d’épigraphie akkadienne* (Signes, Syllabaire, Idéogrammes, 6th ed. [Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner S.A., 1988]), which is an indispensable tool for reading cuneiform Akkadian texts. Other equally indispensable tools for reading Akkadian signs are Rykle Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (AOAT 305 [Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2004]); and Wolfram von Soden and Wolfgang Röllig, *Das Akkadische Syllabar* (4th ed. [Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991]).

La morphologie akkadienne en tableaux is a collection of charts to aid students in learning or reviewing Akkadian morphology. It is divided in three parts: nominal morphology, verb morphology, and paradigms. The first part includes charts on the morphology of nouns, adjectives and pronouns. The second part includes charts on the basic morphological structure of verbs, followed by charts on the strong verbs and the weak verbs. The third part includes paradigms of the active participle, the verbal adjective, the infinitive, the stative, the present-future (“*l’inaccompli*”), the perfect, the preterite (“*l’accompli*”), the imperative, and the moods. As the title of the book indicates, it contains primarily charts, with a minimum of explanation, sometimes none at all. However, further explanations are not imperative, since the work is intended as a complement to the author’s earlier grammar (*Manuel de langue akkadienne*, PIOL, 50 [Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, 2001]) and exercise book (*Pratique de la grammaire akkadienne: Exercices et corrigés*, Langues et cultures anciennes, 6 [Bruxelles: Éditions Safran, 2006]). Therefore, the work