

the New Testament and Gnosticism. Her most recent book is written for the layperson or the pastor who are interested in a scientific study of the background of the canonical and extracanonical gospels. Populist media and publications, such as Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* are a welcome antagonist, which Perkins confronts with a judicious use of text, form, and source criticism.

Perkins first examines the genre of gospel in the Hellenistic setting of the first century. She then draws upon the historical backdrop to explain the development of writing, transmission, and canonicity in the NT period and beyond. The subsequent chapter takes a close look at the sources available to the canonical gospels, which includes a balanced discussion of Q and the question of priority. Mark, Matthew, and Luke are each treated in a separate chapter, before Perkins deals with the second- and third-century gospels.

The strength of this book is the balanced view of the author and the inclusion of the extracanonical gospels. Throughout the book, Perkins remains evenhanded. She critically weighs mainstream and eclectic viewpoints and illustrates the pros and cons of both. Where the available information is insufficient, she presents the evidence and allows the reader to take a position. Yet, she does not shy away from emphatically asserting her stance in opposition to erroneous assumptions, as presented in the media. Additionally, the final chapter dealing with extracanonical gospels is a unique and much-needed contribution to the area of biblical introductions. Especially the recent debates have fueled the need to find a scholarly approach. In lieu of the footnotes Perkins has added a list of suggested readings at the beginning of each chapter allowing the reader to continue to pursue a deeper understanding of the material.

It is questionable whether or not the book is able to reach its intended audience. While it is easy to read and therefore appeals to laypersons, the arguments are often overly long and technical (i.e. the question of genre). On the other hand, the lack of footnotes and interaction with wider scholarly circles may not be satisfactory for the academic community. It also does not replace, but rather supplements a commentary introduction on the four gospels, for issues like authorship, setting, community, structure, and time of writing are treated on the side, if at all. Except for the final chapter, a good commentary on the canonical gospels will highlight the same issues as this introduction, albeit not as in-depth nor as balanced. It is therefore a helpful supplement.

Overall, Perkins has masterfully crafted an introduction to the synoptic gospels that objectively analyzes the synoptic issues, while interspersing it from time to time with her refreshing subjective spiritual experience.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

EIKE MUELLER

Perry, T. Anthony. *The Honeymoon Is Over: Jonah's Argument with God*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006. xxxvii + 250 pp. Paper, \$19.95.

The book of Jonah has been called one of the "strange" books of the Bible, and its proverbial "strangeness" challenges simple solutions. T. Anthony

Perry claims that a close reading of this biblical book “may bring us to understand and even approve Jonah’s deep religious and existential rebellion” (xii). An expert in romance philology and comparative literature, the author tackles “important ideas in the book of Jonah [which] do not often come up for discussion and yet are of great interest to our contemporaries.” These ideas include topics such as suicide, near-death experience, mere survival and existence of human beings, the moral capacity of animals, erotic theory, and universalism (xiii).

The Honeymoon Is Over has four parts. Part 1, “The Ocean Experience,” examines Jonah 1:2. The repetitive use of the word “down” in Jonah 1 means, according to Perry, that Jonah wanted to die. The prophet’s prayer in Jonah 2 is both a petition and a thanksgiving for the saving of his life.

Part 2, “The Dry-Land Experiments,” deals with Jonah 3:4. Jonah 3 demonstrates how, through God’s generosity, the prophet is given a second chance, bringing Jonah to repentance, which, in turn, leads to a concern for others. The second time Jonah is told to proclaim the message, it is to be not against but to Nineveh. This detail suggests that Jonah will beg Nineveh’s inhabitants to repent. When the people of Nineveh heed Jonah’s warning, they “disguise themselves as animals” (48) and humble themselves together with their animals. Jonah 4 tells of the booth that Jonah built east of the city. Perry notes that the booth points to the merit system, while the plant that God provides stands for the gift system. The gift of the plant becomes the source of Jonah’s great joy. Yet it comes as a surprise to see that the prophet was far more preoccupied by the judgment he hopes will happen to Nineveh than the repentance that was happening in Nineveh. A comparison with Elijah’s experience at Horeb leads Perry to conclude that the wind from the east is a positive element in Jonah’s experience since it represents “the divine revelation as a silent sound” (65). The author’s comparison with Elijah’s experience is very illuminating.

Part 3, “The Theology of the Book of Jonah,” examines the complex nature of the book, which, according to Perry, is “in reality many books: of love, of prayer, of repentance, and of prophecy” (75). He suggests that the analogy of divine love as a human marriage, as found in Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Song of Songs, is also attested in Jonah through words such as “wilderness” and “dove,” as well as through themes such as jealousy and a lovers’ quarrel. Based on the overall context of the book, the author makes a bold claim that the last verse in Jonah 4 should not be read as a question, but as an assertion by God that in the future he will not show compassion to the people of Nineveh because “their repentance was not sincere” (169). It is certain that some readers will object to this proposal because it is primarily construed on the historical events that took place in Nineveh’s later history.

Part 4 focuses on the literary perspectives of the book of Jonah. Commenting on the genre of the book, Perry characterizes it as an acted parable filled with supernatural and fantastic elements. Yet he also proposes that the ideal approach to Jonah is prophetic, immediately followed by didactic and pedagogical. The author “practices what he preaches” because he spends

no time in trying either to prove or disprove the supernatural elements in Jonah's book. Life lessons from Jonah seem to be his priority, and he wrestles with the timeless value of this biblical book throughout.

Finally, the conclusion of the book is followed by four excurses, a bibliography, and three indices.

Perry's book is well written and an easy read for a general audience. Its pages are replete with quotations from comparative literature, especially from the wealth of Jewish religious writing. The book combines traditional views with a number of fresh insights. Perry notes that "Our attention [on the book of Jonah] should be focused less on originality than on organic relevance to the context of our present text" (15).

While general readers will profit from reading *The Honeymoon Is Over*, those who will benefit the most are the readers who value a comparative literary approach to the books of the Bible.

Walla Walla University
College Place, Washington

ZDRAVKO STEFANOVIC

Polok, Władysław. *Geneza I wczesny rozwój adwentyzmu europejskiego* (The genesis and early development of European Adventism). Podkowa Lesna: Signa Temporis, 2008. 221 pp. Paper, 20,00 zł.

Most Polish Adventists would consider their knowledge of Adventist history, in the United States and Europe, to be relatively complete and organized. This work radically opposes this common view. It is evident that the pioneers of this radical Protestant movement never received an extensive and satisfying monograph in Polish. There are at least a few reasons why this is: a lack of primary information which has been lost throughout the years; a lack of historical knowledge (yes!); and finally, as the author states, an incorrect approach to the tough and objective moments in the history of the work of the church.

The main advantage of this scholarly work is that the author states clearly the methodology and consequently follows it. The scholar writes: "I used the following research methods: beginning-progressive, which looks at certain activities of the Adventist pioneers in Europe in the beginning and historical development; and also comparative, which is based on the comparison of the pioneers' input in Adventist development. I also used the analytic-synthetic method as my main investigative instrument of archival and historic material. This became the source of my main synthesis in the text. The point was to approach the subject broadly, especially during the early stages of development and function of the organization. I believe the paper is based on sufficient archival material, coming from inside the church, but also from national archives, not restricting myself only to certain issues of the magazines, letters and published accounts" (15-16).

The first chapter of the dissertation reviews certain historical events in a sociopolitical and religious context, including differences in the Roman Catholic Church and also widely understood evangelical perspectives. The