

personal experience and by observing others that archaeological “facts” were provisional and subject to change and, furthermore, that archaeological interpretations were often subjective and slanted to correspond with the excavator’s (and his or her disciples’) own historical position or ideology. Consequently, Noth was critical and cautious about utilizing archaeology as a tool for appraising biblical history, particularly when making correlations with the Deuteronomistic History. Nevertheless, this reviewer believes that the high level of scholarship, the presentation of so much carefully analyzed archaeological data, and the overall quality of scholarly inquiry and analysis demonstrated in this book are exemplary, making it worthy of appreciation even by the late German master himself.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

JEFF HUDON

Helmer, Christine, ed. *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009. 326 pp. Hardcover, \$39.00.

Four hundred and sixty-five years after his death, Martin Luther continues to impact the world by the originality and genius of his ideas and the power and passion by which he expressed them. *The Global Luther* attempts to reinterpret and assess the monumental impact and the relevance of Luther’s ideas on the modern world. The book is divided into five major themes consisting of sixteen essays written by sixteen authors and an introduction by the editor.

The first section, “Luther’s Global Impact,” written by Risto Saarinen, Peter C. Hodgson, and Munib A. Younan, focuses on Luther’s global impact, moving between historical interpretation and contemporary concerns. Saarinen describes the significance of Luther’s life as an urban “legend” in theology, modern literature, and philosophy. Hodgson contextualizes Luther’s view of freedom, especially in the West and particularly in the American civil-rights movement. Younan describes and recontextualizes Luther’s views on the relation of Christianity to other global religions.

The second section, “Living in the Midst of Horrors,” alludes to Luther’s hymn, “In the midst of life we are to give expression to the task, challenge and despair of living in the world today” (8). The essays in this section contextualize Luther’s life and work by wrestling with what it means to be human in the face of experiences that defy meaningful explanation. James Jones explores Luther’s doctrine of justification through his academic discipline of psychology by analyzing Luther’s psychological and emotional makeup. Volker Leppin struggles with Luther’s doctrine of God in the face of life’s horrors. Krista Duttonhaver works out a theology of suffering in the dialogue between Luther and the twentieth-century thinker Simone Weil. Jacqueline A. Bussie ends the section with a message of hope in a world filled with despair and suffering. This hope we have in the possession of promises that are not yet completed.

Section 3, "Language, Emotion, and Reason," addresses Luther's attention to how reason and emotion are conveyed through language. One of his greatest literary contributions was his translation of the Bible into German, which showed a remarkable sensitivity to the capacity of language to describe reality. Birgit Stolt, using literary linguistics, examines Luther's translation practices and shows how he is careful about using specific terms to express emotions, particularly the ones attached to the experience of justification. Hans-Peter Grosshans studies Luther's texts on reason to prove that Luther considered reason a gift from God to advance communication and understanding.

Section 4, "Luther's Theology for Today," is probably the most significant because it "highlights Luther's specific distinctive ideas that have made a lasting impact on Lutheran traditions and beyond." The most significant of these ideas, justification and the theology of the cross, are the foundation of Luther's theology and have generated the most reflection from theologians and nontheologians across the centuries. Theodore Dieter analyzes why Luther's doctrine of justification still matters today. This vital issue remains the *raison d'être* of Christianity. Antti Raunio addresses the social and ethical implications of justification in the political reality of the Nordic welfare states. Ralph F. Thiemann analyzes Luther's theology of the cross within the contemporary context of religious pluralism.

Section 5, "Politics and Power," addresses the ecclesial and political dimensions of human life in the world. One of Luther's most revolutionary ideas, the "priesthood of all believers," if it had been applied directly to existing political and religious structures, would have had a profound revolutionary impact. However, Luther's own ambivalence about this idea greatly limited its impact on the existing political and religious orders of his time. Peter J. Burgard analyzes Luther's rhetoric from a literary linguistic perspective. Allen G. Jorgenson shows how the idea of the priesthood of all believers can be applied to today's liberation movements. Vitor Westhelle focuses on the binary opposition of the "two kingdoms" and recontextualizes his theory in view of the Lutheran global population.

The sixteen authors of the book who attempted to apply Luther's thinking to the issues of our day have done a good job, considering the complexity and enigmatic nature of the man. Recognizing the difficulty of analyzing the work of one of the most original and provocative theological thinkers of all time and using the prism of their various disciplines, these authors give new and exciting ways of reading and interpreting Luther. They struggled mightily in their attempts to grasp the immensity, depth, and paradoxical nature of many of Luther's ideas. Birgit Stolt captures it well when she describes Luther as impossible. How do you label or classify him? Is he a "mystic humanist, or a renaissance personality, or a forerunner of the Enlightenment"? It seems that "he has characteristics of them all" (131). She warns of misusing his writings and treating him as a man of our time. The other extreme is no better, for

we also risk seeing him merely as a medieval former monk caught in the superstitions of his time. Part of the complexity of Luther lies in the fact that we must discard the saying that “truth often lies somewhere between.” In the case of Luther, he was “both/and” rather than between. Stolt describes him as modern in his theories and practice of biblical translation, and medieval in his outlook on life and the world.

Part of the problem in understanding Luther is that he was the master of paradoxes. Many of his theological ideas are expressed in paradoxes and opposites. For example, he writes of a God who is revealed in his hiddenness. He speaks eloquently of freedom, but asserts that the Lord demands subjection to the authority of the state. He sees the Bible as promises and law, grace and judgment. He encourages the peasants to embrace their freedom, but urges the knights to destroy these same freedom-seeking peasants.

These essays highlight brilliantly the pervasive influence of Luther’s idea on much of modern Western thinking. The theological ideas on justification and the theology of the cross are still a major theological foundation for much of evangelical Protestantism. Luther’s principle of biblical translation and his passionate and precise use of words to capture the emotion of the biblical text have set the standard for critical biblical translation. His focus on freedom throughout his writings is rightly recognized by some of the writers in this book. One describes it this way: “One word captures what Luther’s name, life and work were all about: freedom was inscribed—by his decision—into his name. Luther created the name “Luther” for himself, deriving it from the Greek word *eleutheria* (“liberty”) (11). Luther’s focus on freedom was, however, on spiritual, not political or economic, freedom. But that does not prevent his admirers and disciples from appropriating his concept of freedom to their situation. The peasants of his day, as well as the civil-rights movement’s greatest hero, Martin Luther King, understood the term in this way. King was so inspired by Luther that his name was changed from Michael King Jr. to that of the great reformer, and through the providence of history the two men would be linked forever.

While Luther has been excoriated by his enemies and lionized by his admirers, the question must be asked, Will the real Martin Luther stand up? We can learn much from his own writings, but, of course, these writings must also be interpreted within his times. Luther’s writings can be vulgar and harsh, especially against his enemies. He appears at times to be bellicose and dogmatic, acting much like those he was castigating. At times, however, his writing overflows with compassion, love, and tenderness, and he appears as a gentle, caring pastor. In many ways, Luther personifies all of us in our ambiguity and sometimes contradicting personalities. The writers of these essays explore much of this ambiguity and give new perspectives on Luther. In some ways, this book teaches us something about ourselves, revealing to us our own inconsistencies, contradictions, and paradoxes if we are willing to

be open to them. For those who read and admire Luther, this book should be an important addition to their library.

Andrews University

TREVOR O'REGGIO

Hepner, Gershon. *Legal Friction: Law, Narrative, and Identity Politics in Biblical Israel*, Studies in Biblical Literature 78. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. xx + 1110 pp. Hardcover, \$155.95.

Gershon Hepner is a poet and independent scholar who has written a number of articles on law and narrative. *Legal Friction* has been described by the editor as a cross-disciplinary, progressive work, designed to broaden the horizon of biblical scholarship in line with the series *Studies in Biblical Literature* published by Peter Lang. The work is divided into three parts: the Genesis narratives, the narratives in Exodus-Samuel, and primeval history (Gen 1:1–11:25). The author covers a wide range of secondary sources, including Rabbinic literature (Mishnah, Tosephta, and the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds), the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, post-midrashic literature, classical authors, and ancient Near Eastern texts and inscriptions. An extensive index and a fifty-page bibliography indicate the breadth of this volume.

Legal Friction is an intertextual study (a method reintroduced by, e.g., A. Roberts and further developed by S. Sandmel, I. Seeligmann, N. Sarna, and M. Fishbane) that follows the innertextual approach of David Daube, who first identified legal elements in narrative. Daube's student Calum Carmichael is credited for encouraging Hepner to enter the study of law and narrative (xvi). As the title suggests, the book is about alleged social friction among different identity groups within ancient Israel as reflected in law and narrative. Interest in literary analysis and historical criticism is also shared by Carmichael, but both interpreters reach conclusions diametrically opposed to each other. For Carmichael, the laws were written after the narratives of Genesis, whereas for Hepner "the Genesis narratives were written in the light of biblical laws, which are their *Vorlage*" (539). Be that as it may, it goes to show the subjective nature of generic theories and the tentative character of proposals for reconstructing social settings behind the laws and narratives of the Hebrew Bible.

Hepner deals specifically with the Genesis narratives and the Sinai codes (Covenant Code, Priestly Torah, Holiness Code, Holiness School, and Deuteronomy). The book is built upon the following assumptions: the Genesis narrative (1) was codified primarily in the exilic and partially in the postexilic periods, long after the Sinai laws were given; (2) was cast in light of the Sinai laws by making the patriarchs either conform to or transgress them; (3) upheld the unconditional covenant of the patriarchs, over against the futility of applying the Sinai covenant literally; (4) signaled God's preference