

It is the one phrase that makes the epistle overtly Christian with a highly developed christology as found in the later writings of the first century and onwards. I have argued elsewhere, however, that if we would view the genitive as subjective (“faith of our Lord Jesus”) rather than objective (“faith in our Lord Jesus”), we would eliminate the christological-sociological quandary that is faced by those of us who see the epistle’s setting in as early a period as we are wont to view it.

The “History of Interpretation and Reception” at the beginning of each section is exhaustive and most helpful. Professor Allison is careful to include all the major works (including sermons of major church fathers). Readers will find this survey and summary most helpful. Of exceptional value is his survey and summary of the debate over the “faith-works” passage in 2:14-26. I must, however, fault Allison for failing to see this pericope in the context of the entire chapter as well of 1:27. Much more space is devoted to the question of its relation to Paul than to the passage’s social context. It is important to note that because James is seen as a pseudepigraphon, the author of the commentary dismisses any attempt to “divine the socio-economic circumstances of James and his readers” (668).

Allison’s dismissal of the social world and the socioeconomic question is a major weakness of the work. But I question how careful and thorough he has been in his research and presentation of the position of other interpreters of James. I found in numerous instances my position was misrepresented. For example, on p. 193, contra Allison’s reading of my position, the rich are persons within James’s community. James is not addressing members versus nonmembers. In order to comfort the suffering poor, he condemns the rich. Both are part of the community (a point Allison agrees with on p. 206). Even more serious is when he conveniently has me condemning all rich (p. 642), rather than pointing out that James, in James’ own setting, condemns all the rich whom he saw as oppressive. And finally, he totally and erroneously misquotes me on p. 644. In my work I argue (following L. A. Schokel) that the poor should be patient and not violently fight the rich, because God himself will resist them. Allison has me saying that the poor should resist the rich. I point out these examples, not to be defensive, but to raise the question as to how much care Allison has taken in working with his sources.

Despite the problems I have with positions of this work, no student of James worth his or her salt can ignore this massive and insightful work. It is a must-have in every New Testament scholar’s library.

Walla Walla University  
College Place, Washington

PEDRITO MAYNARD-REID

Bergmann, Michael, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea, eds. *Divine Evil: The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011. 337 pp. Paperback, \$43.00.

“*Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham*,” coedited by Michael Bergmann, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea, consists of a compilation

of essays presented at a conference hosted by the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame in 2009. The title of the Conference was “My Ways Are Not Your Ways: The Character of the God of the Hebrew Bible,” and it explored philosophical and biblical issues related to theodicy. The emphasis was placed on troubling passages in the Hebrew Bible which have allowed for polarized opinions: to some, God is portrayed as wrathful, punitive, intolerant, jealous, misogynist, homophobic, promoting slavery, unjust, etc., while to others God is portrayed as wholly good, compassionate, merciful, just, and morally perfect. The exclusive focus on the Old Testament functions as a connection point between the three major Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Also, as an interdisciplinary project, *Divine Evil* provides an opportunity for conversation among philosophers and philosophers of religion, as well as biblical scholars.

Although every one of the authors has a unique perspective on the moral character of the God of Abraham, the reader will surely consider it worthwhile to be exposed to all of them.

The book begins with an “Introduction” in which summarized background information is offered, as well as suggestions for areas for future study. The “Introduction” is followed by three parts which contain ten essays (chapters), each accompanied by a shorter critical response made by another scholar, and a final response made by the original author. The first part, “Philosophical Perspectives: Problems Presented,” presents objections to the moral character of God. The second part, “Philosophical Perspectives: Solutions Proposed,” presents various responses from theistic philosophers to the issues discussed in the first part. The third part, “Theological Perspectives,” provides additional responses from biblical scholars.

Some of the chapters will be highlighted here. For example, in “Does God Love Us?” Louise Antony compares Adam and Eve’s story with a fairytale and concludes that God not only behaves as an abusive father, but anyone who identifies as his child is displaying the psychology of an abused child. On the other hand, in “The Problem of Evil and the History of Peoples: Think Amalek,” Eleonore Stump describes a possible world in which the Hebrew Scriptures’ difficult passages (the slaughter of the Amalekites in this case) could be considered as literal happenings and yet rightly understood from the perspective of the main presuppositions of Christianity. This, Stump believes, allows for the coexistence of both the validity of the text as it is narrated and the loving character of God (this is Stump’s account for a Christian worldview). In “Canon and Conquest: The Character of the God of the Bible,” Christopher Seitz argues that Biblical texts can only make sense in the context of the whole canon (he urges a canonical study). Under that premise, according to Seitz, God is not portrayed apologetically as if he were searching for justification, but instead depicts himself as he is.

The “Concluding Remarks” provide the reader with a very short compilation of the main ideas presented throughout the chapters and an admission of pending challenges.

As it can be expected, the wide-ranging nature of this work leads the reader to several different directions under the umbrella of theodicy. In an attempt to summarize the main concepts presented, I would say that on the part of the “critics” there is a recurrence of an old and well-known question: “If God is perfectly good and omnipotent, why do the Old Testament narratives describe him differently (as evil)?” From their point of view, this question leads to illogical and irreconcilable answers. On the other hand, some recurrent concepts contained in the “defenders” arguments are: moral progress (God’s ethical adaptation to a people that needed step-by-step restoration), divine-command theory (strong divine command), skeptical theism (human cognitive limitations in discerning God’s reasoning), and the vulnerability of God (anthropomorphism), among other references to interpretative methodologies.

Many of the arguments given in the book—implicitly or explicitly—seem to be dealing with the dilemma of whether to read the text at face value or under other types of interpretative options. That is, critical importance seems to be given to the interpretation mode or methodology. Along these lines, several of the essays touch upon the status of the Old Testament as divinely inspired Scripture as well as the meaning and application of inspiration.

This book’s nature is highly academic and would most likely present a serious challenge for everyday readers of the Old Testament. In fact, the book demands that the reader be familiar with issues concerning theodicy, inspiration, hermeneutics, biblical studies, and philosophy at a scholarly level. This dynamic is reflected in Louise Antony’s question: “Why would a benevolent God ‘reveal’ himself in so obscure a way that one needs a PhD to understand him?” (56) Although her point is well taken, it is also often evident to the everyday Bible-believing reader that the questions under discussion might have no easy answers. Thus, even the nonacademic reader will typically be required to partake in an extra effort in order to navigate the realm of theodicy.

Despite the implicit limitations in regards to the complexity of the matters under discussion, such a diverse compilation of philosophical critiques, analysis of biblical passages, and suggested theodicies is an excellent medium to familiarize oneself with the variables and complexities involved in matters of theodicy within the Old Testament.

The unique and varied perspectives exposed by the different authors in regards to the moral character of God surely provide a space for dialogue and inquiry, and for exploratory answers to the concerns of a thoughtful reader.

Berrien Springs, Michigan

IRIANN IRIZARRY

Cameli, Louis J., *Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality: New Paths to Understanding*, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2012 171 pp. Paper, \$12.63

How can the Roman Catholic Church minister effectively to members with same-sex attractions and yet maintain its traditional teaching concerning homosexual behavior? This seems to be the heart of the issue that Louis