BOOK NOTICES

AVALOS, HECTOR. *The End of Biblical Studies*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2007. In this radical critique of his own academic specialty, biblical scholar Hector Avalos calls for an end to biblical studies as we know them. He outlines two main arguments for this surprising conclusion. First, academic biblical scholarship has clearly succeeded in showing that the ancient civilization that produced the Bible held beliefs about the origin, nature, and purpose of the world and humanity that are fundamentally opposed to the views of modern society. The Bible is thus largely irrelevant to the needs and concerns of contemporary human beings. Second, Avalos criticizes his colleagues for applying a variety of flawed and specious techniques aimed at maintaining the illusion that the Bible is still relevant in today’s world. In effect, he accuses his profession of being more concerned about its self-preservation than about giving an honest account of its own findings to the general public and faith communities.

BOTTA, ALEJANDRO. *The Aramaic and Egyptian Legal Traditions at Elephantine: An Egyptological Approach*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008. This is a study of the interrelationships between the formulary traditions of the legal documents of the Jewish colony of Elephantine and the legal formulary traditions of their Egyptian counterparts. The legal documents of Elephantine have been approached in three different ways thus far: first, comparing them to the later Aramaic legal tradition; second, as part of a self-contained system, and more recently from the point of view of the Assyriological legal tradition. However, there is still a fourth possible approach, which has long been neglected by scholars in this field, and that is to study the Elephantine legal documents from an Egyptological perspective. In seeking the Egyptian parallels and antecedents to the Aramaic formulary, Botta hopes to balance the current scholarly perspective, based mostly upon Aramaic and Assyriological comparative studies.
BROWER, KENT E., and ANDY JOHNSON, eds. Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007. Throughout the biblical story, the people of God are expected to embody God’s holy character publicly. Therefore, holiness is a theological and ecclesial issue prior to being a matter of individual piety. Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament offers serious engagement with a variety of New Testament and Qumran documents in order to stimulate churches to imagine anew what it might mean to be a publicly identifiable people who embody God’s very character in their particular social setting.

COLLINS, BILLIE JEAN. The Hittites and Their World. Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007. Lost to history for millennia, the Hittites have regained their position among the great civilizations of the Late Bronze Age Near East, thanks to a century of archaeological discovery and philological investigation. The Hittites and Their World provides a concise, current, and engaging introduction to the history, society, and religion of this Anatolian empire, taking the reader from its beginnings in the period of the Assyrian Colonies in the nineteenth century B.C.E. to the eclipse of the Neo-Hittite cities at the end of the eighth century B.C.E. The numerous analogues with the biblical world featured throughout the volume together represent a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of the varied and significant contributions of Hittite studies to biblical interpretation.

CRAWFORD, SIDNIE WHITE. Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008. The biblical manuscripts found at Qumran, contends the author, reflect a spectrum of text movement from authoritative scriptural traditions to completely new compositions. Treating six major groups of texts, she shows how differences in the texts result from a particular understanding of the work of the scribe—not merely to copy but also to interpret, update, and make relevant the scripture for the contemporary Jewish community of the time. This scribal practice led to texts that were “rewritten” or “reworked” and considered no less important or accurate than the originals. Propounding a new theory of how these texts cohere as a group, Crawford offers an original and provocative work for readers interested in the Second Temple period.

DUNN, JAMES G. D. The New Perspective on Paul. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007. This collection of essays highlights a dimension of Paul’s theology of justification that has been neglected—that his teaching emerged as an integral part of his understanding of his commission to preach the gospel to non-Jews and that his dismissal of justification “by works of the law” was directed not so much against Jewish legalism but rather against his
fellow Jews’ assumption that the law remained a dividing wall separating Christian Jews from Christian Gentiles.

FINKELSTEIN, ISRAEL, and AMIHAI MAZAR. The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel. Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007. Three decades of dialogue, discussion, and debate within the interrelated disciplines of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, ancient Israelite history, and Hebrew Bible over the question of the relevance of the biblical account for reconstructing early Israel’s history have created the need for a balanced articulation of the issues and their prospective resolutions. This book brings together for the first time and under one cover a currently emerging centrist paradigm as articulated by two leading figures in the fields of early Israelite archaeology and history. Although Finkelstein and Mazar advocate distinct views of early Israel’s history, they nevertheless share the position that the material cultural data, the biblical traditions, and the ancient Near Eastern written sources are all significantly relevant to the historical quest for Iron Age Israel. The results of their research are featured in accessible, parallel syntheses of the historical reconstruction of early Israel that facilitate comparison and contrast of their respective interpretations. The historical essays presented here are based on invited lectures delivered in October of 2005 at the Sixth Biennial Colloquium of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism in Detroit, Michigan.

GILLIS, CAROLE. An Introduction to Ancient Greece: The Aegean and Its Neighbors from c. 7000–700 bc. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007. Carole Gillis’s Ancient Greece is more than a concise synthesis of the Aegean area from Neolithic times to the rise of the Greek polis. It takes into consideration also the neighbouring areas of the Near East and Egypt and sets earlier Aegean civilizations in their wider context, removing them from the splendid isolation that seems sometimes to characterize the Minoan, Helladic, and Cycladic civilizations, as well as the Geometric and archaic periods.

GOODMAN, MARTIN. Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007. In 70 c.e., after a four-year war, three Roman legions besieged and eventually devastated Jerusalem, destroying Herod’s magnificent temple. Sixty years later, after further violent rebellions and the city’s final destruction, Hadrian built the new city of Aelia Capitolina where Jerusalem had once stood. Jews were barred from entering its territory. They were taxed simply for being Jewish. They were forbidden to worship their god. They were wholly reviled. What brought about this conflict between the Romans and the subjects they had previously treated with tolerance? Martin Goodman—equally renowned in Jewish and in Roman studies—examines this conflict, its causes, and
its consequences with unprecedented authority and thoroughness. He delineates the incompatibility between the cultural, political, and religious beliefs and practices of the two peoples. He explains how Rome’s interests were served by a policy of brutality against the Jews. He makes clear how the original Christians first distanced themselves from their origins and then became increasingly hostile toward Jews as Christian influence spread within the empire. The book thus also offers an exceptional account of the origins of anti-Semitism, the history of which reverberates still.


HOGAN, PAULINE. “*No Longer Male and Female*: Interpreting Galatians 3:28 in Early Christianity.” Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008. Galatians 3:28, in particular the phrase, “There is . . . no longer male and female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus,” would seem to point towards an ethos of gender equality among Christians. Acting on this assumption, a number of scholars have considered the phrase significant in reconstructing attitudes towards women in early Christianity. Until now, however, a study of the history of interpretation of Gal 3:28 has been lacking. The exploration of the post-New Testament career of the verse is therefore the focus of this book. The approach is historical-critical, discussing the exegesis of Gal 3:28 in the context of attitudes about the roles of women in the first four centuries CE. This study reveals that early Christians did not always approach this verse with the same concerns as modern readers. Ancient commentators brought several different questions to their discussion of Gal 3:28, and it is impossible to discover the trajectory in exegesis of this verse that might have been expected. It becomes apparent that during the first four centuries of Christianity most writers treated Gal 3:28 as a statement about the identification of Christians with Christ and therefore an indication that in the resolution of various differences into unity, they could achieve an ideal state. While some writers applied this concept to status differences between men and women, others used it to discuss the qualities of the ideal disciple, the character of the first created human beings, the state of the believer in heaven, and even the nature of God.

different perspective on the history and theology of the Priestly source of the Pentateuch. By means of an analysis of specific texts—for example, texts that deal with the Sabbath and the Festivals—Knohl demonstrates the existence of two separate priestly sources, loosely connected with what we have known as P and the Holiness Code. The “Holiness School” is shown to be active subsequent to that of the Priestly Torah and, in fact, to be responsible for the great enterprise of editing the Torah. Knohl examines the conceptions of divinity and ritual reflected in Priestly thought and legislation in ancient Israel and the changes revealed in these conceptions over time.

LUIJENDIJK, ANNE MARIE. *Greetings in the Lord*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008. This is the first book-length study on Christians in the ancient Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus, the site where some of the most important and oldest fragments of early Christian books were unearthed. Bringing back to life the people in these dry papyrus letters and documents, the book reveals how diverse Christians lived in this city of diverse situations.

METTINGER, TRYGGVE N. D. *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 2–3*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007. The Eden Narrative transforms our understanding of the story of Eden and the fall in Genesis 2–3, a text of cardinal importance in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Using the tools of literary and religiohistorical analysis, Mettinger demonstrates that this is a well-integrated text about the divine testing of the first two human beings. The author goes on to show that the ontological boundary between the divine and human realms was a theme known to other ancient Near Eastern cultures as well. He proceeds by means of step-by-step analysis, with discussions of narratology, theme, genre, and the tradition history of the biblical text; he includes significant sidelights from Mesopotamian literature.

NICKELSBURG, GEORGE W. E. *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007. In this groundbreaking publication, originally published in 1972, George Nickelsburg places ideas in their historical circumstances as he probes biblical and postbiblical texts and challenges widely accepted scholarship. This book provides a window into aspects of the ancient apocalyptic worldview whose dynamics and functions are often misunderstood.

PETRAPOULOU, MARIA-ZOE. *Animal Sacrifice in Ancient Greek Religion, Judaism, and Christianity, 100 BC to AD 200*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. A study of animal sacrifice within Greek paganism, Judaism,
and Christianity between 100 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. After a vivid account of the realities of sacrifice in the Greek East and in the Jerusalem Temple, Maria-Zoe Petropoulou explores the attitudes of early Christians toward this practice and the reasons why they ultimately rejected it.

RUSSELL, NORMAN. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Deification was not only a pagan concept but a metaphor for a deeply Christian view of the purpose of human life. Norman Russell brings together much recent research on the Church Fathers from the second to the seventh centuries, offering an analysis of their spiritual teaching and setting it within the context of the times.

SA Bin, PHILIP. *Lost Battles: Reconstructing the Great Clashes of the Ancient World*. London: Hambledon & London, 2008. The great battles of Alexander, Hannibal, and Caesar arouse endless interest, but our understanding of them is marred by the weakness of the surviving source material from so long ago. *Lost Battles* employs simple simulation techniques to make traditional battle diagrams “come to life.” Readers will actually be able to refight engagements for themselves, gaining greater insights into whether proposed tactics and deployments make military sense, and experimenting with alternative possibilities such as the presence or absence of the Persian cavalry at Marathon. This book is the culmination of ideas and models developed and refined by Sabin in the course of over 15 years.

VAN DER TOORN, KAREL. *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007. The scribes of ancient Israel are indeed the main figures behind the Hebrew Bible, and this book tells their story for the first time. Drawing comparisons with the scribal practices of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, van der Toorn details the methods, assumptions, and material means that gave rise to biblical texts. Traditionally seen as the copycats of antiquity, the scribes emerge here as the literate elite who held the key to the production and the transmission of texts.

VAN SETERS, JOHN. *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006. A generally accepted notion in biblical scholarship is that the Bible as we know it today is the product of editing from its earliest stages of composition through to its final, definitive, and “canonical” textual form. So persistent has been this idea since the rise of critical study in the seventeenth century and so pervasive has it become in all aspects of biblical study that there is virtually no reflection on the validity of this idea” (from the Introduction). Van Seters proceeds to survey the history of the idea of editing, from its origins in the pre-Hellenistic Greek world, through Classical and Medieval times,
into the modern era. He discusses and evaluates the implications of the common acceptance of “editing” and “editors/redactors” and concludes that this strand of scholarship has led to serious misdirection of research in modern times.

VOGT, PETER T. *Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah: A Reappraisal.* Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007. One of the few areas of consensus in modern Deuteronomy scholarship is the contention that within the book there is a program of reform that was nothing short of revolutionary. Although there are divergent views regarding the specific details of this revolutionary program, most scholars agree that, in fundamental and profound ways, Deuteronomy was radical in its vision. This vision was expressed in key ideas: centralization of worship, secularization, and demythologization (of earlier traditions). However, Vogt argues that these ideas fail to account adequately for the data of the text of Deuteronomy itself. Instead, he claims, at the heart of Deuteronomic theology is the principle of the supremacy of Yahweh, which is to be acknowledged by all generations of Israelites through adherence to Torah. Thus, the book of Deuteronomy is in fact radical and countercultural, but not in the ways that are usually adduced. It is radical in its rejection of ANE models of kingship and institutional permanence, in its emphasis on the holiness of life lived out before Yahweh, and in its elevation of Yahweh and his Torah.

WILLIAMSON, H. G. M., ed. *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel.* Proceedings of the British Academy 143. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. In popular presentation, some treat the Bible as a reliable source for the history of Israel, while others suggest that archaeology has shown that it cannot be trusted at all. This volume debates the issue of how such widely divergent views have arisen and will become an essential source of reference for the future.