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Book review:

Anderson, Gary A. *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

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tique, which ought to be of concern to any interpreter of Deuteronomy, but more explanation of the basis of the typological connection is needed. In places, this seems to be provided by Jungian psychology, which enables the motif of the journey in Deuteronomy to be applied to the journey of life in a symbolic sense (I, pp. 45-46).

Such questions aside, this monumental work of scholarship is a worthy addition to the series and a valuable aid for all serious students of Deuteronomy and the Old Testament.

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Isaiah

by John Goldingay

New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series. Hendrickson, Peabody, 2001. 397 pp. \$11.95. ISBN 1-56563-223-0.

READERS WHO NEED MORE than study Bible annotations, yet who are unable to reap the full benefit of more technical studies presupposing knowledge of biblical languages, will find the New International Biblical Commentary (NIBC) a satisfying middle ground. The series advocates "believing criticism" (p. viii), a hermeneutic aimed at deepening faith while remaining engaged with critical methods and results. Though the NIBC is based on the New International Version (NIV), this need not be a liability in settings where other translations are primary, especially the NRSV (whose alternative construals Goldingay frequently cites with approval).

This book reflects scholarship's renewed interest in Isaiah's unity, after a century of attention divided among the so-called First, Second/Deutero-, and Third/Trito-Isaiahs. As part of his effort to understand this unity, Goldingay has adopted the more accessible role-labels of ambassador, poet, preacher, and disciple (narrator and editor) to account for these various parts or stages (pp. 2-5). Their heuristic value is readily apparent from his comments on 58:1-9a: "As well as taking up the promises of the Poet, the Preacher thus takes up the challenges of the Ambassador" (p. 326). Also commendable is Goldingay's refusal to allow apologetics to

undercut exegesis, principally evident in his rejection of simplistic Christological interpretations that have impoverished Isaiah as a resource for contemporary praxis. The virtues of Goldingay's Isaiah are considerable: affordability, portability, currency, and profundity. If one keeps in mind its aims and constraints, it should not disappoint.

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The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination

by Gary A. Anderson

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, 2001. 257 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 0-664-22403-2.

THIS BOOK'S CENTRAL ARGUMENT is that the biblical story of Adam and Eve, ostensibly about beginnings, has since antiquity been interpreted rather consistently by Jews and Christians through the lens of biblical endings. For Jews, the couple's expulsion from Eden foreshadowed the biblical exile and the redemption from sin that came through the Torah given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The subjugation of the angels beneath the Son of Man (as interpreted on the basis of Psalm 8) was understood to signal the election of Israel and its redemptive role for all of humanity. For Christians, the first Adam was interpreted in the light of the last Adam (i.e., Jesus), and Eve in the light of Mary. The Son of Man was identified as Jesus, and Psalm 8 became a proof text for the election of Christ and the redeemer of humanity. For both Jews and Christians, the expulsion from Eden came to be viewed not merely as a punishment but as the first step toward penitence, and thus also a necessary first step in God's master plan to ensure the eventual perfection of humanity.

To support this thesis, Anderson casts his interpretive net widely and explores a diverse array of Jewish and Christian sources, including a number of apocryphal texts, ancient commentaries, medieval and renaissance paintings, and later literary texts, such as John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This is perhaps the book's greatest asset, for it moves the history of biblical interpretation beyond the textual and canonical confines that

typify modern scholarship. Also useful is Anderson's adoption of a number of interpretive models that derive from the comparative study of religion and art history. These models allow Anderson to show that, despite a host of interpretive problems posed by the biblical text, the story's Jewish and Christian interpretive histories hang together as unified wholes. As such, this book reflects more a reception history than a canonical approach to scripture.

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The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria

by Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, 2002. 344 pp. \$29.95.
ISBN 0-664-22537-3.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT Jesus really said and did? This book is a comprehensive history of answers to that question. The authors themselves dispense with the so-called criterion of dissimilarity, which allows as authentic only what cannot be traced to Judaism or to the church. Taking its place is the criterion of historical plausibility, which comes down to this: "What Jesus intended and said must be compatible with the Judaism of the first half of the first century in Galilee"; "Those elements within the Jesus tradition that contrast with the interests of the early Christian sources, but are handed on in their tradition, can claim varying degrees of historical plausibility" (p. 211).

Theissen and Winter are mostly persuasive. Yet their recommendations will not reduce the diversity that haunts the field, for the criterion remains malleable. The synoptics contain very little that cannot be made to fit within first-century Galilean Judaism, about which we know so little. Again, one can hardly object to favoring traditions that contrast with the interests of early Christian sources. But how much help is this, given how little we really know about the early church? In the end, this book, full as it is of instructive history and useful suggestions, leaves one wondering: where do we go from here? Like a trap in the forest that catches only the occasional passerby, the criterion of historical plausi-

bility works only on some items. No one would deny that a reconstructed Jesus should be plausible within his Galilean environment and not look too much like a Christian. Yet recognizing this is not going to tell us if he did or did not speak about a coming Son of Man, or whether the pigs really did run over the cliff.

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Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels

by Scot McKnight

Westminster John Knox, Louisville, 2002. 214 pp. \$18.95.
ISBN 0-664-22514-4.

EFFECTIVELY INTEGRATING biblical and sociological studies with classical and contemporary biographies, McKnight provides a balanced and wide-ranging analysis of Christian conversion. While firmly rooted in his evangelical tradition, McKnight takes pains to appreciate the rich and varied *process* of "turning to Jesus" in the gospels and subsequent Christian history, including authentic experiences of (1) lifelong socialization into the believing community, (2) participation in established liturgical initiation rites, and (3) individual decisions of repentance and faith.

Building on Lewis Rambo's delineation of typical "stages" of conversion and Gauri Viswanathan's emphasis on conversion as a form of socio-political dissent, McKnight more specifically unpacks the dynamics of Christian conversion in six "dimensions": context, crisis, quest, encounter, commitment, and consequence. Applying this grid to the gospel portraits of Jesus' followers (converts), McKnight discovers less focus on traumatic turnaround (*à la* Paul's Damascus Road ordeal) and stark religious reorientation (from non-believer to believer) than is often assumed. Peter's developing relationship with Jesus through fits and starts and multiple encounters is more the norm, although in fact there is no singular norm or set pattern of discipleship in the gospels. Within this lively smorgasbord of approaches to Jesus, however, it is important to realize that most of his followers (like Peter) shared a common Jewish heritage and did not in any sense "change religions" upon