

writer of Hebrews bother with these warnings if they can never happen? If apostasy is impossible for the true believer, then why warn against committing it? This view would be strengthened by giving a more decisive answer to this criticism.

The Moderate Reformed view of Randall Gleason is perhaps the most creative of the lot. Gleason agrees that the audience for the warnings is composed of true Christians. He redefines apostasy, however, in a way unlike any of the other three views. For Gleason the danger of apostasy has nothing to do with the loss of salvation. Utilizing Exodus imagery and the larger context of the experience of the Jews in the OT, Gleason argues that the real danger is a deliberate choice to remain immature (i.e. backslidden, as the other views put it) with the result of some kind of potential discipline from God. This discipline would not be an eternal damnation but would consist of a loss of reward that may include physical illness and possibly death. Gleason's view offers a fascinating alternative to the traditional Calvinist/Arminian debate on these passages, but there are some questions to be raised. Gleason's case depends heavily upon external issues like the date of the letter, the life situation of the readers, and the readers' understanding of the OT passages used in the warnings. Some of Gleason's conclusions on these issues cannot be shown with certainty, and if they are proven incorrect then his exegesis will certainly suffer. To what degree are the believers receiving and reading Hebrews analogous to the Jews in Exodus? How close are the situations in reality? Scholarship may never find the true answer to that question. Gleason's argument is interesting and different, but will no doubt receive little attention as a sound solution to the problems of the warning passages.

This book in general provides a thought provoking presentation of the issues surrounding the warning passages of Hebrews. The introduction and conclusion alone are worth the price of the book as a good overview of the issues involved and the various ways of understanding the issues. This work certainly provides the reader with an outstanding overview of the ongoing debate. Though some may argue that the topic is a bit too broad for a book this size, the truth is that the individuals involved handle the topic with humility and accuracy. Each argument is succinctly presented, defended, and critiqued. This book will prove helpful for those wrestling with the warning passages in Hebrews and should be included in classes dealing with this enigmatic epistle.

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Words & the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation and Literary Theory. Edited by David G. Firth and Jamie A. Grant. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008, 317 pages, \$32.00 paper.

In *Words & the Word* David Firth and Jamie Grant have brought together a diverse group of scholars to present an overview of the way various literary theories contribute to biblical interpretation.

Grant R. Osborne opens the volume by discussing rhetorical criticism and discourse analysis, noting the benefits as well as some difficulties with each. He explores exegetical analysis, making a strong case for synchronic rather than diachronic word studies. He treads carefully through the minefield of meaning and authorial intent. Acknowledging the importance of the reading community, Osborne nevertheless believes that “the attempt to elucidate the original meaning is a viable goal” (p. 30) and he presents a “dialogue between *author, text* and *reader*” (p. 31) as a way forward. He then demonstrates these theories with an examination of the Gospels. Throughout his chapter Osborne offers a nuanced presentation of some highly debated topics.

S. D. (Fanie) Snyman’s South African perspective is especially appropriate in a book that inevitably discusses the importance of community in interpretation. He presents the academic shift from diachrony, such as historical-criticism which tends towards an “atomization” (p. 56) of the text, towards synchrony, which views the text in its current form. Snyman offers a “structural-historical approach” (p. 61) which values both. The translator begins by questioning the text but also allowing the text to ask questions in turn. A “text-internal” (p. 63) study includes pericope, textual criticism and structure. “Text-external” (p. 67) elements follow with genre, intertextuality (Snyman does not use this term) and “redactional activity” (p. 69). Finally, the text is subjected to a detailed exegesis, and theological conclusions are drawn. Evangelical readers may want to interact with some of Snyman’s reader-response presuppositions. In addition, the chapter would have benefited from more examples.

In the third chapter Richard S. Briggs proposes speech-act theory as a way out of the “false polarization” (p. 76) between alternatives for the locus of meaning. He shows various ways words in the Bible accomplish things, from God’s “Let there be light” (p. 76) in Genesis to the parables of Jesus. He offers explanations of some of the key terms in speech-act theory and shows their value in biblical interpretation. Finally, Briggs offers a “hermeneutic of self-involvement” (p. 98) which uses speech-act theory to describe the way “readers are drawn into the transformative effects of texts as they construe textual illocutions” (p. 106). One of the joys of this chapter is the hint of humor that Briggs weaves throughout.

Jeannine K. Brown presents “Genre Criticism and the Bible.” She starts with a history of this approach, noting the way emphasis has shifted from genres as archetypes into which authors pour content (pp. 117–18) to genres as more loosely defined guides which authors use or combine for effect. She defines genres, noting their arrangement of features which are formal and thematic, and are socially constructed to communicate. She points out the way genre is communicated to the reader, and the way authors use the ensuing expectations to foreground elements of the text. She also attends to

the complexity and fluidity of genre. She elucidates the process of categorization in which readers inevitably engage and also the preference for certain genres which an individual or a community might hold.

In chap. 5, David G. Firth presents the concept of ambiguity. After noting the predisposition of translators to resolve ambiguities, he describes three different kinds: those intended by the author, those an author creates unintentionally, and those brought to the text by the reader. The first is intrinsic to the text and can be examined exegetically. After wrestling briefly with the locus of meaning issue, Firth presents five helpful types of ambiguity drawn from Empson's work. An author may choose to make "details within the text effective in multiple ways" (p. 160) before finally offering a resolution. An ambiguity might have only one possible resolution, or diverse simultaneous ones. Meanings may combine to enhance communication or they may appear contradictory and force readers to re-examine the text as well as previous assumptions. These types are explained with the help of examples, and then the theory as a whole is illustrated through the life of Saul, showing the way ambiguity is used to elucidate Saul's character.

Jamie A. Grant offers a study of poetics, beginning with the canonical approach. Here, books such as Psalms and Proverbs are assumed to have been collected purposefully. In the Psalms, for example, an examination of the first, last, and central psalms in each book shows connections and contrasts otherwise unnoticed. Themes and semantic repetition reveal interplay and organization among the poems. Grant suggests using David Howard's "lexical, thematic, structural and genre connections" (p. 195) to allow the context to emerge. After working through examples from Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, Grant moves on to discuss Hebrew parallelism. He presents and critiques Lowth's categories (synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic) and proposes instead an analysis which recognizes the interplay between both lines of a bicolon. The chapter concludes with a brief recognition of the importance of the analysis of the poem itself and the poetry present in the NT.

Peter M. Phillips begins the chapter on rhetorics by disproving any dichotomy with reason. He traces development of this discipline through Plato and Aristotle and points out the tendency to move too quickly to textual elements. He therefore adapts Kern's "hierarchy of levels" (p. 236). Level one examines authorial intent, context, and goal. Level two looks at the choice of expression as an attempt to foreground the author's worldview. Level three examines the effects of culture. Phillips lists possible ways of categorizing "preconceptual" (p. 251) OT rhetoric, but offers instead the category of "biblical rhetoric" (p. 255), a form of Grassi's "sacred discourse" (p. 254). Finally, in levels four and five, specific expressions of rhetoric are discovered and analyzed. The value in Phillips's presentation is his focus on the importance of the primary levels of discussion. Along the way, he offers many examples and notes the overlaps with other methods of analysis.

The final chapter consists of Terrance R. Wardlow, Jr.'s introduction to discourse analysis. This is a broad category which analyzes a text "from various viewpoints from the level of the morpheme up through the social environment" (p. 267). It includes many of the approaches featured in previous chapters but combines them to reach its conclusions. A thorough demonstration using the Marah incident and the Beatitudes follows. Wardlow concludes that the strengths of discourse analysis are its broad approach, its attention to all three loci of meaning as well as to the historical and the present social contexts, and its focus on current applications. Technical language and the need to learn at least the basics in such a variety of disciplines are potential drawbacks. Nevertheless, Wardlow presents this approach as one which offers "an array of tools for engaging the text and attempting to hear it speak on its own terms to us today" (p. 311).

The introduction to *Words & the Word* suggests that these are "explorations in literary theory and biblical interpretation" (p. 14) designed to "stimulate discussion" (p. 15). The book thus succeeds admirably in what it set out to do. It presents a wide array of topics in an introductory yet thorough manner, engages current scholarship outside of the boundaries of evangelicalism while showing the benefits and applicability of these resources to those within that interpretive community, and points the way towards further research for those whose interest has been piqued by the discussion.

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Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice. By Daniel J. Treier. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008, 221 pp., \$19.99 paper.

Daniel J. Treier is associate professor of theology at Wheaton College. He is also an author and co-editor of several books including *Virtue and the Voice of God: Toward Theology as Wisdom*, *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, *The Community of the Word*, and *Justification*.

Those familiar with Christian academic publishing realize that theological interpretation is experiencing a resurgence. A case in point is the work under review here. As the title of the book suggests, Treier's work is introductory in nature, and as the subtitle (*Recovering a Christian Practice*) suggests, it is positive towards the subject. But, is theological interpretation a revolutionary, reactionary, or a reform movement? While a case could be made for any or all of the three, for Treier it is primarily a reform movement that "seeks to reverse the dominance of historical criticism over churchly



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