

the collective, yet Jewish identity itself abides since the traditions and values found in religious expressions of Judaism still exist as a patrimony to draw on. Judaism includes religion but is more than that.

Goodman further illustrates how Israeli Judaism draws on its traditions as resources, but not necessarily as binding strictures. A. D. Goodman embraced a secular mysticism, arguing that secular Jews were closer to God than religiously observant ones. This allows some secular Israelis to embrace spiritual elements from their traditions while not feeling bound to it in the same way as Orthodox Jews. This is a contextual counterpoint to the phenomenon of the religiously unaffiliated commonly studied in North American and European contexts. Goodman introduces readers to the traditions of Sephardi or Mizrahi Jews who immigrated from Muslim countries. They bring a different encounter to the requirements of Torah than the Orthodox leadership drawn from European contexts. Having a different encounter with modernity, Mizrahi communities offer a form of traditionalism that permits adaptive engagement with Torah. Sidestepping the ideal of an unchanging Judaism, this movement offers an insight into other forms of embodying the Jewish tradition commonly overlooked in Western discourses.

In sum, Goodman presents to readers an informed account of contemporary developments within Israeli Judaism that is essential information for anyone who would want a deeper study of contemporary Judaism.

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*Between Heaven and Earth: New Explorations of Great Biblical Texts.*

By Gerhard Lohfink. Translated by Linda M. Maloney. Colleagueville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2022. xii + 362 pages. \$39.95.

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Unlike some of Lohfink's earlier works, *Between Heaven and Earth* is not focused on developing a particular topic, such as salvation history, church, Jesus, or resurrection and eternal life. Instead, it is a collection of seventy interpretations of biblical texts that Lohfink presented in a wide variety of situations over the last few years. There is a longer essay on COVID-19 (fifteen pages), but most of the entries are three to five pages in length. Despite the headings, part 1 ("Basics") and part 3 ("In the Joy of Faith") do not have a clear thread linking the essays together. Part 2 ("Festivals and Feasts"), however, is unified in

its collection of biblical texts of the liturgical year from Advent to the Feast of Christ the King. Preachers who read this book will appreciate the chart that is included at the end of the work that locates sixty-four of the individual chapters in the calendar of the church year.

Lohfink's main ideas reappear in this collection of essays: the election of Israel through whom God longs to save the world ("The Burden and Joy of Being Chosen"); God's fidelity in the face of Israel's infidelity ("A Saga of Resistance"); God's strengthening of Elijah when all seems to hang in the balance ("Elijah Wants to Die"); the call of Elisha as the model for the call to discipleship ("A Cloak Flies through the Air"); the greatest commandment ("The Heart of the Torah"); the hiddenness of the reign of God ("How the Reign of God Happens"); the new family of Jesus ("When Kindred Live Together in Unity"); discipleship ("Discipleship: Hard and Easy"); the law of superfluity ("Overflowing Riches"), and the Lord's Prayer ("The Strangeness of the Our Father"). Rather than a restatement of "old" ideas, Lohfink manages to include new and expanded insights into these familiar themes. As an example, in the case of Israel's election, Lohfink considers Jesus as part of this story: "In the end Jesus was alone and bore the whole burden of election along with his cross. Of all the elect in Israel there remained in that moment only one who had understood God and desired nothing other than to serve God's plan. Now everything—the whole future of the world—depended on that one. He bore the burden of history; he had finally and irrevocably become the 'Servant of God'" (230).

There are significant parts of the book that tackle new biblical passages, providing insights on the text as well as contemporary applications. Perhaps one example will serve to illustrate his fresh approach to a text. In the chapter "How the Church Grows," Lohfink examines chapter 6 in the Acts of the Apostles. In the first part of his analysis, he connects the word "complain" to Israel, noting that "the young Jerusalem community repeats the sins that the Old Testament attributes to the Exodus generation: mistrust, complaining, rebellion" (326). Further, he clarifies the financial, linguistic, and cultural differences between the Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora who had settled in Jerusalem and the Aramaic-speaking Jews who had always lived in Israel. Pointing out that the martyrdom of the Hellenist Stephen, and the resulting persecution, was the catalyst that propelled all the members "except the apostles" to be scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, Lohfink notes that "we can only interpret that historically to mean that it was the Hellenists who had fled Jerusalem while the Hebrews (here represented by the figure of the Twelve) could remain in the city" (328). Lohfink indicates that it was the Hellenists who made this little congregation of Jewish disciples of Jesus into an international people of God, but who, at the same time, were also partly

responsible for the fact that the church's connection to Israel became more and more fragile (328). In the second part of his analysis, Lohfink describes the initiative of the Twelve to resolve the conflict by a proposal that creates a new category of service that makes it possible for there to be *convivium* and *convivere* in the community again, while also doing justice to the community's missionary task. Lohfink concludes this chapter by indicating that Luke means to say that it is especially in crisis that the community can grow. Lohfink's advice for the contemporary church is not to lose heart when the church falls into profound crisis—as frightening as this may be—but to recognize that the crisis can lead to a new step in the church's growth (330).

Lohfink has a conversational writing style that invites the reader to follow the allusions to other biblical texts, to perceive what is new in familiar words and phrases, to be immersed into the vast expanse of the Scriptures, and to become excited and energized as the word of God comes alive through his analysis and application. It is not an understatement for me to say that, like Lohfink's earlier books, *Between Heaven and Earth* has broadened my understanding of sacred Scripture, has enriched my preaching, has stirred within me a more critical appreciation of the tension between a church grounded in biblical faith and the contemporary world, and, perhaps most importantly, has challenged me to become a more committed disciple of Jesus.

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*A Concise Theology of the New Testament.* By Frank J. Matera. Biblical Studies from the Catholic Biblical Association, 1. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2022. xii + 120 pages. \$19.95 (paper).  
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This slender book is part of a larger effort by the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) to make contemporary biblical scholarship more readily available to pastors and the general public. In this inaugural volume in what promises to be an extensive series, Frank Matera masterfully recapitulates his own work on New Testament theology.<sup>1</sup> What Matera offers here is not “cutting

<sup>1</sup> Frank Matera, *New Testament Theology: Exploring Diversity and Unity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).