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# Review of Walther Zimmerli. *The Fiery Throne. The Prophets and Old Testament Theology*. Edited by K. C. Hanson.

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## SHORTER NOTICES

CRISTOLOGIA PRIMITIVA: DALLA TEOFANIA DEL SINÀI ALL'IO SONO GIOVANNEO. By Walther Binni and Bernardo Gianluigi Boschi. Bologna: Dehoniane, 2004. Pp. 248. € 18.

Old Testament scholars Binni and Boschi seek to find the historical evidence for the christological shift in early Christianity from emphasis on Jesus' saving messiahship to his personal divinity. The authors believe that the Johannine community understood the dialogue in Exodus between God and Moses as identifying the preincarnational figure of Christ as the "I am" of Exodus 3, that is, "unequivocally as the God who appeared to Moses on Sinai" (6). By this type of "Christonomic reading" the authors want "to throw a new light on the whole Old Testament" (232) in order to "arrive at a new (for us) and original understanding of all of trinitarian dogma by means of Sacred Scripture" (7).

Although this approach identifies a plausible line of christological development within the Johannine community and in harmony with certain contemporary Jewish (and later [!] rabbinic) speculation, B. and B. go too far when they claim that the "I am" statements originated from the historical Jesus himself (213). It is one thing to see intimations of divinity in the few times that Jesus says "I am" in the Synoptic Gospels, but it is quite another to claim that Jesus identified himself as YHWH, the God of the Old Testament patriarchs (217). B. and B. are guilty of the historical fallacy as well in their exegesis of the Exodus material. They claim that the encounter between God and Moses on Sinai retains a primitive tradition in which "the Name [that God gives Moses] is hypostatically other than Yh, sharing however the eternal nature" (48). I doubt that the scholarly community will accept their claim that "the structure itself of the Law reveals the *pluripersonalità* in God: a true and proper plurality of persons . . . an intense communitarian life in the one God" (231).

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THE FIERY THRONE: THE PROPHETS AND OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY. By Walther Zimmerli. Edited by K. C. Hanson. Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003. Pp. xv + 179. \$16.

Scholarly discussion of Old Testament theology is greatly served by Fortress Press's decision to include these republished essays by the late Walther Zimmerli (1907–1984) in the Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies series. Edited by K. C. Hanson, the series includes reprints of works by such luminaries as A. Schweitzer, H. Gunkel, J. Jeremias, S. Mowinckel, and N. Perrin. Z. is a fitting addition to this distinguished group.

The bibliographies and notes have been edited and revised slightly by Hanson from various translations of Z.'s essays, originally published in German between 1951 and 1985. The collection is designed to make Z.'s scholarship on the classical prophets and Old Testament theology accessible to the student or nonspecialist. As such, this collection would serve well as a supplementary textbook. It includes several useful tools: along with two indexes on modern authors and ancient sources, a complete bibliography of Z.'s works in English, and select updated bibliographies on topics of Z.'s expertise: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Old Testament theology, and the history of Israelite religion.

The title, *The Fiery Throne*, is aptly chosen and points to the heart of Z.'s scholarly work, the Book of Ezekiel, where Z.'s legacy endures. In addition to his form-critical and tradition history scholarship on the prophets, Z. was known for his work in biblical theology.

The final essay, "Biblical Theology" (originally published in 1982), is especially valuable, as it shows a mature historical-critical scholar late in his career casting a sensitive theological eye toward both the Old and New Testaments. Seminary students, specialists, and nonspecialists alike, particularly those with theological interests, will not be disappointed by the solid scholarship



and theological insights of one of the great biblical scholars of the 20th century.

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READING WOMEN'S STORIES: FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE. By John Petersen. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004. Pp. 226. \$22.

This is not just another book on women in the Bible, but a careful presentation of selected stories through narrative approaches: character, plot, point of view, construction of meaning, and poetics. Modern readers have difficulty with the brevity and reticence of biblical stories, so a more extended analysis through literary criticism brings out aspects of the narratives that would otherwise remain hidden. The stories examined are those of Hannah (1 Samuel 1), the Song of Deborah (Judges 5), and Tamar (Genesis 38), all biblical women who transcend traditional roles.

The story in 1 Samuel 1, ostensibly about the birth of Samuel, in fact centers on the figure of Hannah, who meets all the criteria for a central character. She is presented as a model of faith, and her prophetic canticle is the high point of the story.

Not the whole story of Deborah, but only the Song in Judges 5:2–31 is the focus of the second study. It is a remarkable piece of very old Hebrew poetry, written in paratactic style, that makes sudden shifts in point of view—ideological, spatiotemporal, and psychological—all of which reveal the remarkable flexibility of the poet and the different levels of concern in the audience.

The story of Tamar in Genesis 38 is about the only biblical woman who is called righteous. The outrageous behavior of Judah and his irregular claim of authority over his former daughter-in-law form the backdrop of a plot that features the courageous and ingenious actions of a woman determined to get what is owed her in justice.

All three analyses reveal stories about women who emerge as strong characters in times of breakdown of

family structures. The intense literary analysis given to these texts provides new and valuable insights to old stories about which perhaps we thought we knew everything.

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ROMAN WIVES, ROMAN WIDOWS. THE APPEARANCE OF NEW WOMEN AND THE PAULINE COMMUNITIES. By Bruce W. Winter. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. Pp. xvii + 253. \$26.

Much New Testament scholarship has assumed that all antique women lived within the boundaries of Greco-Roman gender roles that prescribed confinement to the private sphere as wives and mothers. Pauline texts addressing women's behavior, however, suggest that this was not always and everywhere the case. In this valuable study, Bruce Winter draws upon a wealth of recent classical scholarship to provide a context for the behavior glimpsed in Pauline texts. The results are illuminating.

Part 1 presents the evidence for the appearance of the "new" Roman women in the first century C.E., the changes that facilitated it, and the responses that their departure from traditional norms provoked in men of power. Augustan marriage legislation, Stoic and Neo-Pythagorean moral treatises, and parts of Pauline and Deuteropauline letters all target the unconventional behavior of these women whose financial security and, hence, relative independence from husbands, brought greater social freedom and public involvement.

In part 2 W. discusses the conduct of women in the Pauline communities in the light of the changing mores and behaviors traced in part 1. Thus, wives praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered in the Christian assembly (1 Cor 11:2–16) were replicating the attitude and actions of "new" Roman women. Interpreters perplexed by early Christian writers' interest in the seemingly trivial matter of dress and adornment will be enlightened by W.'s astute treatments of unveiled wives (1 Cor 11:2–16), married women (1 Tim 2:9–15),