

most impressive about this book, however, is the freshness of Miller's interpretation of various psalms and the way he directly connects the Psalter to fundamental questions of Christian theology. For example, in his discussion of Psalm 14 Miller astutely observes that the crucial question about the reality of God is not whether or not God exists, but whether or not God's existence makes any difference in the way human beings live their lives. He likewise illuminates the manner in which one comes to know God, which in the Psalter (and in the Old Testament generally) is inextricably bound to outward signs of obedience (e.g., Ps 14:4; Jer 22:15–17). As Miller weaves together the Psalms and Christian theology he also brings together various psalms that speak in complementary ways about who God is. What emerges is the impression that the Psalter, with all its diversity, is finally a unified book that has its own theology. The skill with which Miller makes this point and the seamless connections he establishes between the Psalms and Christian theology make this an immensely useful book for students and pastors as they address fundamental theological questions, and for any who desire deeper understanding of "the LORD of the Psalms."

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Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary

by Karin Hedner Zetterholm

Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. 210 pp. \$32.00.
ISBN 978-0-8006-9798-3.

THIS BOOK OFFERS A fresh perspective on the genre of classical Jewish scriptural interpretation known as midrash. Though concerned primarily with the exegetical assumptions and techniques of the ancient rabbinic sages who

practiced midrash, Zetterholm pursues her discussion beyond its customary disciplinary lines to address corresponding topics in the study of early Christianity and modern Judaism. The result is a book rare in its ambition yet no less successful in its implementation.

Zetterholm begins with an informative overview of the circumstances in which the rabbis developed the multifaceted approach to reading the Hebrew Scriptures conventionally categorized as midrash. Highlighting the range of times, places, and historical conditions of its development, she presents a series of textual case studies exemplifying the myriad literary forms typical of the genre. Having thus demonstrated the versatility of the midrashic medium, she next shows how the interpretive strategies of Jesus, Paul, and their earliest interpreters often are echoed in later rabbinic exegesis. Finally, Zetterholm analyzes the legacy of midrash in contemporary Judaism. Proceeding from the observation that modern Jewish denominations trace their theologies to the ancient rabbis, she demonstrates how representatives of each have used principles of midrashic exegesis to guide their application of scriptural knowledge to matters of contemporary religious concern.

Zetterholm's critical treatment of the classical midrash is methodologically current and consistently lucid. Her textual demonstrations demand minimal prior familiarity with the contents and languages of the classical rabbinic library. Regarding the New Testament, Zetterholm admirably avoids the common mistake of backdating the exegetical strategies of the rabbis to the first century. She nevertheless argues persuasively for the empirical advantage of reading those early Christian efforts as part of the same Jewish cultural continuum that later yielded the rabbinic midrash. Perhaps most remarkable is Zetterholm's effort to relate those ancient efforts to those of

modern Jewish thinkers of varying theological persuasions. Finally, her submission of midrash as an aid to Christian appreciation of Judaism recommends her project as a potentially valuable contribution to interreligious conversation.

This book is an exceptional resource for readers seeking to explore Judaism through its engagement of Scripture. Zetterholm's presentation of Jewish tradition in all its past and present expressions is well-informed, evenhanded, and respectful. Both the seasoned scholar and the newcomer to the study of classical Judaism will find much to commend in her innovative and accessible treatment.

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Violence in Scripture

by Jerome F. D. Creach

Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013. 286 pp. \$35.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-664-23145-3.

VIOLENCE IN SCRIPTURE REPRESENTS an important contribution to the growing literature on violence in the Bible and is the most recent volume in the Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church series designed to supplement Westminster John Knox's Interpretation commentaries. The book is arranged canonically (more or less), focusing mainly on violence in the Old Testament, with some attention given to texts dealing with eschatological judgment in the New Testament.

Creach argues that many biblical texts that seem to sanction violent acts actually critique violence. Moreover, Creach believes some of the most notoriously violent texts—like the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 and the conquest narrative in the book of Joshua—should be read symbolically (cf. Douglas Earl, *The Joshua Delusion? Rethinking Genocide in the Bible* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011]). He argues this point at length, suggesting that some of these stories are not really about violence, but about persons of faith overcoming evil or being fully devoted to God. Ultimately, Creach believes that “the whole of Scripture may be understood rightly as a grand testimony *against* violence” (p. 5).

Creach is to be commended for addressing violent Old Testament texts that many prefer to ignore and for attempting to read these texts in ways that do not encourage further acts of violence. I am confident many readers will appreciate and benefit from his careful discussion of selected passages. That said, I would briefly offer two critiques. First, I found Creach's handling of divine violence in the Old Testament unsatisfying. Creach adopts the biblical text's rationale that God kills “to maintain the proper order in creation” (p. 46), do justice, and liberate the oppressed. Yet this fails to address the troubling moral dimensions of God's violent behavior in these passages (which sometimes involves the deaths of women and children). Second, I found Creach's emphasis on the symbolic meaning of certain texts overdone. While there are undoubtedly symbolic dimensions to some of these texts, I am not convinced that this way of reading should be primary or that it is sufficient to overcome the problems these texts raise, particularly in the case of the conquest narrative.

In sum, this book will be helpful to those who want a general introduction to violence in the Old Testament and suggestions for how to read the Bible in ways that do not encourage violence. While not everyone will be persuaded by Creach's approach to these texts, his perspective