

Sweat also makes a unique contribution in using paradox (along with parable and irony) in seeking to understand God's identity and actions in the Markan narrative. Combining literary and theological considerations is a helpful exercise in describing God's activity throughout the Second Gospel. Sweat fittingly argues that paradox, parable, and irony "have rarely been part of a discussion of the Gospel's understanding of God, or of the theology of the text as a whole" (p. 19).

Additionally, Sweat's study offers a fresh way to negotiate the seeming impasse in handling exegetically problematic passages in the Gospel (e.g. Mark's so-called "hardening theory" in 4:10–12, the role of both Jesus' disciples and his opponents in his passion and death, and Mark's enigmatic ending in 16:1–8). The paradoxical language in Mark serves as a tensive bridge that can help Markan scholars handle the "both-and" realities of the radically divided interpretive options for such problematic passages. As Sweat aptly comments, "What previous scholarship has not recognized, however, is that evidence for two primary options with the text of the Gospel may indicate the Evangelist's irreducibly paradoxical language" (p. 179). Sweat makes an important contribution by showing that problematic passages can lead to a greater appreciation for the baffling and enigmatic role of paradox in Mark's Gospel.

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*Rejected Prophets: Jesus and His Witnesses in Luke-Acts.* By Jocelyn McWhirter. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013, x + 144 pp., \$29.00 paper.

This short volume by Jocelyn McWhirter, associate professor of religious studies at Albion College, investigates a widely recognized theme in Luke-Acts, the presentation of Jesus and his followers as prophets. Her thesis is that Luke develops this prophetic portrait because the OT prophets set a precedent for three themes important to Luke's agenda: Gentile inclusion, Jewish rejection, and condemnation of the temple.

Although all four Gospels portray Jesus as a prophet, Luke has the strongest and clearest prophetic presentation. Like the prophets of Israel, Jesus performs miracles, predicts the future, illustrates oracles with parables, and performs symbolic prophetic actions. Luke also portrays Jesus' followers as prophets, beginning with Jesus' forerunner John and continuing with the roles of Peter and the other apostles in Acts.

Why this prophetic portrait? McWhirter claims that Luke is dealing especially with the failure of messianic events to play out as expected. Jesus was not a warrior, leading a Jewish army to defeat the Romans; he was an artisan from Nazareth, crucified by the Romans. Many of his followers had suffered similar fates. Most Jews had rejected his message, while Samaritans and even uncircumcised Gentiles were becoming his followers. Jerusalem and the temple had not been restored by the Messiah; indeed, they had been destroyed by the Romans.

To respond to these anomalies Luke develops three basic strategies. First, he writes an "orderly account" around the themes of Jesus's death, acceptance of the gospel by Samaritans and Gentiles, rejection by the Jews, and activities in the holy city—showing how all these things were part of God's purpose and plan. Second, Luke frequently introduces God's own testimony to confirm Jesus' messianic identity and mission to suffer and die. Third, and most importantly, Luke characterizes Jesus and his witnesses as prophets. The OT prophets fulfilled these same roles: ministry to the Gentiles, consistent rejection by Israel, and predictions of Israel's judgment because of the nation's disobedience. McWhirter points out that Luke's agenda is similar to that of the author of 1 Maccabees, who wrote to defend the legitimacy of the Hasmonean dynasty over against claims of illegitimacy. He did so by modeling the deeds of the Maccabees after those of biblical heroes. Luke does the same, comparing the deeds of Jesus and the apostles to those of the prophets of old.

In chapter 2, "Messiah and Savior," the author acknowledges that these prophetic precedents cannot address the chief objection to early Christian faith: that Jesus, a condemned criminal, is actually the prophesied Messiah. Luke confirms Jesus' messianic identity in a variety of ways: the announcement by birth narrative characters, the testimony of John the Baptist, God's own voice from heaven, Peter's confession, etc. Yet how could Jesus be the Messiah if the Romans were still in power and the temple was in ruins? The answer appears in the birth narrative prophecy of John the Baptist's father, Zechariah. The salvation Jesus the Messiah will bring is the "knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 1:77). Luke's Jesus consistently fulfills Zechariah's prophecy. He offers forgiveness to sinners, tax collectors, and even the criminal beside him on the cross. The death and vindication of the Messiah in the Gospels paves the way for Acts, where the church offers salvation through the forgiveness of sins. After his resurrection, Jesus explains that this mission has just begun: "Thus it is written . . . that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name" (Luke 24:46–47).

In chapter 3, "Trustworthy Prophets," McWhirter demonstrates how parallels with the prophets show Jesus and John to be trustworthy prophets. There are numerous allusions in Luke's birth narrative to OT precedents, especially the birth of Samuel. The next three chapters (chaps. 4, 5, 6) concern Luke's portrayal of Jesus as a prophet. Although Samuel provided a prophetic model for the birth stories of Jesus and John, his adult life does not set the same precedent. Instead, other prophets fulfill that role. In chapter 4, "A Light for the Gentiles," the author shows how Elijah's prophetic vocation parallels that of Jesus. God sends Elijah to a Gentile, providing the model for the extension of God's salvation to all people. Like Elijah, Jesus resuscitates a stricken child and appoints followers who will receive his spirit. McWhirter traces a dozen or so similarities between Jesus and Elijah, many hinting at the expansion of the gospel beyond Israel to the Gentiles.

In chapter 5, "A Rejected Prophet," McWhirter discusses the key Lukan theme of Jewish rejection of the gospel. Again, Luke uses prophetic parallels to explain the rejection of Jesus. The rejected Messiah was also a prophet, Luke af-

firms, and Israel already had a history of rejecting her prophets. While many OT prophets faced opposition and rejection, Luke points especially to Moses and Jeremiah. Moses' prediction that God would raise up a prophet like him is twice applied to Jesus, and Moses' rejection becomes a model for that of Jesus (Deut 18:15; Acts 3:22–23; 7:37). Jeremiah was Israel's quintessential rejected prophet. Like Jeremiah, Jesus warned Israel's leaders, predicted Jerusalem's destruction, and mourned over the city. Jesus' examination by the high priest has parallels to Jeremiah's interrogation by king Zedekiah (Jer 38:14–15).

In chapter 6, "The Doom of Jerusalem," McWhirter discusses the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and its devastating effect on Jews and Christians alike. Luke makes sense of the horrific event by showing how the Lukan Jesus, like many of the OT prophets (Hosea, Zephaniah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), repeatedly predicted Jerusalem's destruction. These events were not an accident of history, but God's judgment against the nation for rejecting its Messiah.

In chapters 7, 8, and 9, McWhirter turns to Luke's presentation in Acts. Chapter 7, "Prophets like Jesus," examines how, in scenes reminiscent of the Elijah/Elisha story, Peter and the apostles receive Jesus' spirit and perform his miracles. In chapter 8, "Rejected Prophets," we see the Jewish council rejecting the apostles in the same way they rejected Jesus and in the same way the Israelites rejected Moses. In chapter 9, the author shows how Spirit-filled prophets like Philip, Peter, and then Paul, took the gospel beyond its Jewish boundaries to the Samaritans and the Gentiles.

In a short conclusion, the author draws some implications for twenty-first century Christians. Luke's assertion that the destruction of Jerusalem was a consequence of Jewish rejection of the gospel seems far less relevant today in a post-Holocaust world, after seventeen hundred years of Christian dominance over Jews. Yet Christians today still need to hear Luke's prophetic voice as a message to them. "Luke's prophets recall the church to Jesus' mission—a mission to bring good news to the poor; to heal the blind, the lame, the lepers ... to seek out and to save the lost; to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations" (p. 126).

McWhirter's volume is thorough and well argued, a good example of intertextual analysis. She identifies a number of prophetic parallels not noticed by other interpreters. The book's strength is its insights into Lukan theology and narrative purpose. The book has few weaknesses, though occasionally I had trouble following how particular points contributed to the overall thesis. The author seems sometimes to wander off into (interesting) exegetical discussions that distract from a systematic analysis of Luke's prophet theology.

At times, too, the parallels drawn between Jesus and prophetic precedents seem stretched. For example, the pouring out of the Spirit seems to have much more to do with eschatological renewal than the passing on of the prophetic spirit from Elijah to Elisha. I also found the author's assertion that Luke is writing to a predominantly Jewish-Christian audience less than convincing. She claims that questions like "Why was Jesus crucified?" "Why did he eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" and "Why was the temple destroyed?" are "Jewish questions

posed by Jewish characters" (pp. 123–24). Yet they could equally be posed by a predominantly Gentile, but mixed, community trying to exert itself as the true people of God over against the larger Jewish community. There seems to me far too much in Acts defending full Gentile inclusion to posit a predominantly Jewish-Christian audience.

These are small criticisms, however, for a very well-researched and well-written volume. This book will serve students well as a valuable contribution to Luke's narrative theology.

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