

Ida GLASER. *The Bible and Other Faiths*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005. 255 pp. \$18.00.

This volume is the fourth in the *Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective* series published in partnership with John Stott's Langham Partnership International. The series seeks to engage key tenets of Christian belief within the global context, and this volume by Ida Glaser accomplishes this purpose. Glaser, who is affiliated with the Edinburgh Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, explores the roles of noncovenant religions in the Bible and their significance for current relationships with non-Christian faiths. This volume, then, is an introduction to the broader religious background of the OT and NT as well as a biblical guide for Christians to engage other faiths.

The author develops her argument that the Bible contains rich resources for Christian responsibility in a world of religious diversity through three parts. The first part offers an introduction in which a rationale for the subject and an explanation of the author's basic method of biblical interpretation are presented. Most notable in this section is the author's use of a "canonical approach" to biblical interpretation that seeks to identify relevant themes woven throughout Scripture. This hermeneutic is akin to that of biblical theology, and Glaser argues that this method honors the integrity and contexts of solitary biblical passages. Within this paradigm Glaser argues that in order to appreciate more fully the roles the religions play in the Bible, one must move beyond the traditional exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist understandings of Christianity and other faiths. This point is well taken, but Glaser never clearly articulates an alternative biblical paradigm.

More helpful are the following two parts, in which the religions of the wider worlds of the OT and NT are explored. In part two, five chapters are devoted to the rich religious context of ancient Hebrew faith, and here Glaser explores the interrelationships between the covenant people, their neighbors and the land that is shared and religiously appropriated. Within this religiously diverse crucible of temptations to idolatry and unhealthy syncretism, the identity of the covenant people is forged. A highlight of this second section is the chapter devoted to an understanding and appreciation of the book of Genesis against its broader ancient near eastern religious background. After reading this section it becomes clear that the OT has much to say about interreligious issues.

The religious background to the NT is the focus of the next five chapters in part three. Glaser devotes these chapters to describing the nature and impact of Samaritan and Greco-Roman religions on early Christianity. This section highlights how Christianity builds upon religious elements that were contemporary with the early Church, yet emphasizes the discontinuity between the faith of the first Christians and pre-Christian religions. The final chapter in part three presents several tantalizing questions that emerge from early Christianity's interaction with other faiths as recorded in the Bible. This list includes no surprises, as the expected questions such as "Is Jesus the only way to salvation?" and "Can people of other faiths go to heaven?" are raised. The reader is disappointed here, not only by the posing of standard, stale questions, but even more so by the absence of clarity in the author's responses to her own well-worn questions. Indeed, this ambiguity is the greatest shortcoming of this volume. Rather than a mere review of standard content related to the interaction of Christianity and other faiths in the worlds of the Bible, one would have hoped for a fresh supplemental discussion. For example, rather than focusing on the dissimilarities between covenant and noncovenant faiths, it would have been more helpful to focus on the similarities. Instead of asking ultimately the unanswerable (as even the author herself concedes) question, "Who will go to heaven?" it would have been constructive to ask, "What might other faiths know of God?" and discuss the implications of the pervasive theme of general revelation in the Bible.

Even so, this is a valuable volume. The chapters on Genesis and Gentile religions are themselves worth the price of the volume. The discussion of the ways the covenant faiths built upon local, preexisting understandings of God are also very timely. As Christians in the current climate wrestle with whether Allah is God or not, it is helpful to be reminded that both in the OT (*El*) and the NT (*Logos*), the covenant people borrowed local terms for God and infused them with new meaning. This volume, therefore, would be useful for undergraduate courses in biblical backgrounds and world religions. Used along with broader introductory texts, Glaser's volume will provide necessary insights into the role of the religions in the formation of the covenant faiths as recorded in the Bible.

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