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## Book Review: Musa W. Dube, ed., *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*

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an interpreter of ancient Near Eastern literature. The value of these essays lies in their sensitive and insightful exposition of four biblical texts: Judges 5 (pp. 105–18), Genesis 2:4b–25 (pp. 119–59), Genesis 2:25–3 (pp. 161–77), and the Book of Qohelet (pp. 179–204). In these essays Bottéro treats the texts with the kind of insight that comes only from decades of experience in studying related literary types from across the ancient Near East. In fact, his skills as an Assyriologist allow him to highlight the features that he finds to be characteristic of the ancient Israelite religious imagination. While academics might lament the lack of standard documentation, all will benefit from Bottéro's skillful, sensitive treatment of these four texts.

Thus, *The Birth of God* is really two books, both of which are rather dated. The first, the opening chapter, "The Universal Message of the Bible," is dated and obsolete. The second, the four essays on biblical texts, although dated, is still valuable due to Bottéro's insightful exegesis of the various biblical texts and traditions. Here Bottéro's abilities as a skilled interpreter of the humanities shine brightly. His vast background in ancient Near Eastern studies enables him to uncover the nuanced meanings, implications, and uniquely Israelite features of these biblical texts and the traditions founded on them.

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**Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible**, edited by Musa W. Dube. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature and Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001. 254 pp. \$24.95.

I take great delight in having the opportunity to review this collection of thirteen essays having to do with contemporary African women and their engagements of the Bible. Ably edited and introduced by Musa W. Dube, Senior Lecturer in the New Testament in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Botswana, the essays have been long awaited. They fill a tremendous need—among and beyond the women of Africa. They inform and challenge and inspire communities far beyond the circle of the discussants in the book. They make a dramatic statement about the powerful voices and sentiments and creative impulses of African women and their potential to enliven thinking about and approaches to the Bible in particular and the sacred in general. The volume is also a fine contribution to the growing phenomenon of the heightened consciousness and re-awakening among non-dominants throughout the world—different racial-ethnic minority groups, women, the poor—about the social power to be realized in the interpretation of texts and other objects and phenomena widely regarded as canonical.

As Dube's introduction makes clear, the essays address a selection of themes and issues that have been part of the conversations among the women of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. The volume of thirteen essays is divided into six major sections—Storytelling Methods and Interpretations; Patriarchal and Colonizing Translations; Reading with and from Non-Academic Readers; Womanhood and Womanist Methods; The Divination Method of Interpretation; and In Response. In the first section Rose Teteki Abbey, Mmadipoane (Ngwana 'Mphahlele) Masenya, and Dube critically reflect upon African storytelling practices as interpretation. And Masenya and Dube provide fascinating interpretations of biblical stories (Esther and Mark 5) in terms of storytelling. In the second section Dora R. Mbuwayesango and Gomang Seratwa Ntloedibe-Kuswani critically unmask some of the practices and shine light on some of the effects of patriarchal colonialism among the Shona peoples and among devotees of Modimo in Southern Africa. The third section is focused upon "non-academic readers." This is a somewhat odd categorization because the essays by Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro and Gloria Kehilwe Plaatjie do not really seem to address or reflect upon a type of audience different from the other essays. The two essays included in this section do reflect a consistently heightened critical African feminist consciousness in their engagement of biblical texts. In the fourth section can be found two provocative essays demonstrating the power of womanhood/womanist interpretations. Masenya provides a "bosadi" (womanhood: from Northern Sotho word "mosadi," meaning woman) reading of Proverbs 31:10–31. And Sarojini Nadar provides an Indian womanist reading of the character development of Ruth. The fifth section, on divination as method of interpretation, includes a single essay by Dube. The essay focuses upon Ruth in terms of social relations ("international relations") and the needed "healing" offices of divination in such relations. The sixth and final section includes responses from a white North American feminist biblical scholar (Phyllis Bird), an East African theologian and churchwoman (Nyambura J. Njoroge), and a male South African theologian who defined himself as an "African Mordecai" (Tinyiko S. Maluleke). These responses provided rich questions and issues for ongoing work and conversations.

The collection models a number of different methods and approaches of interpretation—storytelling; postcolonialist feminist; womanhood/bosadi/womanist; and the peoples' readings. The collection does not advance a single position or stance, method or approach. It is more interesting and charged than that—its most important and powerful feature is its reflection of a coming into speech on the part of a significant group of African women who heretofore in scholarship have been silent and absent. With this book such women can for now make the claim that they speak for a significant number of (christianized) African women. As important and as persuasive as may be some arguments that are part of some essays, it is the collective arrogation of the African women essayists of their right to invade and disrupt the discursive worlds of

western academic critical biblical interpretation that is most important and astounding. Mission accomplished.

The book should inform the teaching and research of all students of religion, not only biblical scholars. The excuses for not including the “others” on the course reading lists are beginning to ring hollow. The book will facilitate discussion and research on a wide range of topics and issues. It is a great inspiration and challenge.

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**Qumran Cave 4, XXI Parabiblical Texts, Part 4: Pseudo-Prophetic Texts**, by Devorah Dimant. *Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXX*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001. 278 pp. + 12 plates. \$90.00.

This volume comprises the official publication of two fascinating but less well-known sets of fragments found among the bountiful Cave 4 texts. The first set of fragments is called “Pseudo-Ezekiel” (pp. 7–88) and the second set of fragments is called “Apocryphon of Jeremiah” (pp. 89–260). A combined concordance follows (pp. 261–278). Dimant’s general introduction succinctly describes the research history. The fragments have been piquing curiosity since the mid-1960s when John Strugnell first divulged some of their contents. In 1985 Professor Strugnell invited Dimant of Haifa University to share the work of editing, which eventually became fully her responsibility. Dimant’s preliminary publications (in 1988 and 1990) assumed that all the fragments were from “various copies of one writing” (p. 2). But since 1991 the fragments have been divided (based on differences in “vocabulary, style, and subject-matter,” [p. 2]) into the remains of more than one manuscript. Her comprehensive review of all the fragments has led to the presentation in this volume of “two coherent writings, Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Apocryphon of Jeremiah C,” each of which “possesses its own distinctive themes, style, and vocabulary” (p. 3). Also included are the small remains of Apocryphon Jeremiah A (4Q383), Apocryphon Jeremiah B (4Q384) having been published by Mark Smith in *DJD XIX*. In that same volume Smith published what is likely a copy of Pseudo-Ezekiel on papyrus (4Q391).

Those acquainted with the normal protocol of the *DJD* series will recognize the usual physical descriptions of the scrolls (based on Strugnell’s notes), orthography and grammar, transcription, notes on readings, comments. Dimant also presents the evidence for her reconstruction of the connections (physical and thematic) between the fragments. It is a good illustration of the painstaking task of manuscript reconstruction. To Dimant’s great credit, her “comments” sections are quite extensive and replete with