MATSON, MARK A. *In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke.* SBL Dissertation Series 178. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001. xiii+479 pp. $54.00 (cloth).

This book is a 1998 Duke University dissertation written under advisor D. Moody Smith. It is an ambitious, old-fashioned type of source-critical study and is well worth reading. Mark A. Matson's main thesis is that the points of similarity between the passion narratives of Luke and John are best explained if Luke knew some version of the Gospel of John. Most earlier scholarly explanations have not even considered this possibility, since it is usually assumed that the Gospel of John is the latest of all the canonical gospels. Matson does a good job of showing how a number of earlier scholars have noticed the peculiar relationship between the Lukan and Johannine accounts of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection but never paused to consider the possibility that Luke knew John and was blending the Johannine and Markan accounts. Lurking under the surface here (as Matson notes on p. 10) is the assumption that John's higher christology necessitates a later date, on the model that christology developed from low to high over the course of the first century. But already in Paul there are indications of extremely high christologies existing alongside low ones in the first decades of the Christian movement, so there is no reason that John has to be late on ideological grounds. With this logjam broken, Matson is free to examine the relationship between the third and fourth gospels in a new way.

Along the way, Matson deals with some of the major potential objections to his thesis. One problem is the fact that some of the Lukan echoes of John occur in the so-called Western noninterpolations, which, since 1882, have often been thought to be later additions to the text of Luke, even though they are attested in most manuscripts except the Western text-type (B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek,* 2 vols. [New York, 1882]). Thus, some of the echoes of John in Luke could be additions based on John rather than original to the third gospel. Fortunately for Matson's thesis, the opinion of textual scholars in more recent times has swung in favor of seeing the longer texts as original, and Matson himself takes up each individual case in a generally balanced and persuasive manner (chap. 4, pp. 165–232). The most interesting part of Matson's discussion here is his attempt to find a reason why, in the second or third century, some scribe(s) responsible for the Western text family might delete passages from Luke that sounded like John (pp. 199–206). Could this phenomenon be connected to those orthodox anti-Montanists discussed by Irenaeus and the "Alogi" of Epiphanius, who wished to drop the Gospel of John from the list of sacred texts? In order to retain the Gospel of Luke, the Johannine-sounding elements might have been purged. Matson's argument here is stretched a bit thin, especially since the deleted passages do not directly bear on the controversies noted by Irenaeus and Epiphanius. But Matson has at least provided a plausible context for the deletions, if indeed that is what they are.

A more serious obstacle to Matson's thesis is the fact that, if Luke used our Gospel of John, he did not use it as extensively as he used Mark. The specific Johannine features of Luke occur only in limited places, particularly the passion and resurrection accounts, and almost none of the Johannine discourse material appears in Luke. Perhaps Luke and John used a common source, and this accounts for the connections; indeed, this has been the solution of some of Matson's scholarly predecessors. Matson puts forward a similar solution on the last two pages of his work when he raises that possibility that Luke knew a version of

John without the revelation discourses (pp. 447–48); one could consider such a truncated fourth gospel a source for our present Gospel of John, a source also used by Luke. Alternatively, Matson suggests that perhaps Luke wished to reject the type of teaching he found in the Johannine discourses but considered certain narrative parts of John useful as a supplement to the Markan narrative.

Matson has clearly demonstrated a relationship between these two gospels, and he admits he is not the first to do so. His major contribution is to look at the question afresh, without the unnecessary and unproven baggage of a late date for the Gospel of John. For this reason, his work deserves to be read and seriously considered by all scholars interested in the literary relationships among the canonical gospels.

JEFFREY A. TRUMBOWER, *St. Michael's College.*

NANOS, MARK D. *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. xiii+376 pp. $26.00 (paper).

Mark D. Nanos's new work challenges the conventional wisdom about the situation lying behind Paul's letter to the Galatians. Although there are many elements of that conventional wisdom that have been disputed in the past—such as the motivations of the so-called agitators and the shape of their particular arguments—no one has challenged the notion that Paul's "opponents" were followers of Jesus. Nanos argues, to the contrary, that those against whom Paul argues (a group that Nanos refers to as "influencers") were Jews who were not "Christ Believers."

Of course, one immediate and very difficult problem with Nanos's suggestion (and probably the reason that no one has made it before) appears at the beginning of the letter, in the very first verse following the epistolary introduction. There Paul articulates his astonishment at the community's actions because the Galatians were "turning to a different gospel" (Gal. 1:6). Because of the reference to the "gospel" in this verse (along with the mention of circumcision and Law observance elsewhere in the letter), scholars have always assumed that Paul was arguing against Jewish-Christians (as they are typically called) in Galatians.

Nanos's solution to the problem that this passage offers provides him with the hermeneutical key for understanding the whole of the letter. He resolves the problem of Gal. 1:6 by showing that the language of the verse (especially the expression of astonishment at the beginning in θαυμάζω) conforms to the norms of ancient ironic letters. Accordingly, he argues that Paul uses the word gospel ironically in the phrase I am astonished that you are so quickly . . . turning to a different gospel (Gal. 1:6). This gospel that Paul introduces here, Nanos contends, has nothing to do with the "good news in Christ." Instead, here it indicates what Nanos calls "the other news of good," that is, the message that the Galatian community has heard from the synagogue, specifically, that Gentiles must become Jews in order to be reconciled with God. The fact that Paul labels this alternative message—that Gentiles cannot be reconciled to God as Gentiles—a "gospel" is what gives the irony its punch. Nanos offers the paradigmatic parental rebuke, "What am I, your maid?" by way of example. Here he shows that the speaker of this phrase means anything but the fact that he or she is a maid. The fact that the parent is not a maid is comparable to the claim that the "gospel" is not good news for the Gentiles.

Nanos's ironic interpretation of Paul's rebuke in Gal. 1:6 functions as the center

around which the rest of the book revolves. As Nanos points out, this interpretation opens up new possibilities for understanding the social drama playing out in the interaction between the Jewish and Gentile communities as well as Paul's response to that interaction. Nanos fruitfully explores the probable conversation between the Jewish community and the Galatian Gentiles, on one side, and Paul and the Galatian Gentiles, on the other. His concentration on Paul's Israel-centered rhetoric in the apostle's epistolary response to the community is particularly enlightening. Nanos insists, quite correctly I believe, that Paul's Gentile community is caught in the middle of an intra-Jewish argument. The community is striving for compromise, but neither side (the Jewish community, on the one side, and the Jew Paul, on the other) will allow that possibility. Understanding this dynamic helps explain at least one of the more difficult interpretive problems with the letter (that which appears in Gal. 4:9).

There are a few things about the book that I wish the author had done differently. For instance, I would have preferred that Nanos had paid less attention to the prevailing interpretations and focused more on exegeting Galatians itself. Close to a quarter of the book is devoted to the former. There is some exegesis of course (and it is compelling), but more would be desirable. I would also have liked to see the author pay more attention to irony throughout Galatians. The title of the book led me to expect this. As it stands, though, most of the discussion about irony revolves around Gal. 1:6–7.

These are minor complaints though. This is a strong book that lays out a compelling new scenario. It is well researched, well thought out, and well written. The author displays an exceptional understanding of the interplay between rhetoric and the social setting of the letter. Overall, I highly recommend it. Although many will disagree with its findings, no one seriously interested in Paul can afford to ignore it.

PAUL B. DUFF, *George Washington University.*

GOSS, ROBERT E., and WEST, MONA, eds. *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000. xvi+239 pp. $20.00 (paper).

HANKS, TOM. *The Subversive Gospel: A New Testament Commentary of Liberation*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000. xv+267 pp. $27.00 (cloth).

With the publication of these books, Pilgrim Press has made available two significant resources for biblical criticism that may or may not find wide acceptance in the community of biblical scholarship. For some, queer scholarship remains an oxymoron, nothing more than a passing fad representing exaggerated personal biases and what one contributor to the Goss and West volume refers to as "novelistic" readings of Scripture (p. 187). A great many students of the Bible, professional and amateur, continue to reject any readings of the Bible by self-identified sexual minorities, and some who teach biblical studies at the university level may dismiss these books for the unevenness of their contributors' backgrounds and approaches. Nevertheless, *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible* and *The Subversive Gospel: A New Testament Commentary of Liberation* clearly represent the next step in the movement of queer criticism into the once forbidden territory of mainstream discourse about the Bible.

The books' titles reflect a defensiveness toward the synagogue and church and the schools that train their clergy that is probably inevitable at this point in Western cultural history. The Goss and West anthology sets out to "take back the Word" from the hegemony of European male heterosexual readings of it, a point of view typically made invisible by passing as normative. To accomplish this goal, *Take Back the Word* gathers a truly delightful community of commentators, drawing equally from professional biblical scholars and practicing pastors and rabbis, with a student and a lawyer included for good measure. The variety of social locations represented by the contributors leads to a certain unevenness of approach, which will be a strength for those who welcome a widening of the critical circle and a weakness for readers who insist on "proper" qualifications to do biblical criticism. What unites *Take Back the Word*'s contributors is a conviction that Scripture remains an essential foundation of Jewish and Christian faith communities today, a point of view that some might find surprising in a book written by self-identified sexual minorities. If the Bible has been used to beat you up, why not reject it? Yet the disparate voices of *Take Back the Word* are united in their commitment to offer strategies of reading the whole Bible that reclaim and rehabilitate the sweep of its message for both queer scholars and queer members of faith communities.

Take Back the Word offers a kind of primer of postmodern and postcritical approaches to texts, at the same time reaching back before the dominance of the historical critical approach to the Bible to offer startling historical reconstructions that revitalize some very familiar stories. One essay reminds us that Jesus addresses the Canaanite woman with a racial slur and compares her courage in approaching him to that of a drag queen asking a group of teenagers on a dicey street corner for help with a sister who has been beaten (pp. 43–54). Others point out that Matthew's gospel declares that I.R.S. agents and sex workers are entering the kingdom before churchgoers (pp. 185–95), hold up Ruth's seduction of Boaz as a strategy for reading the Bible in desperate straits (pp. 13–22), and reemphasize the transgressiveness of the love between an Israelite and a Shulamite described in the Song of Songs (pp. 126–42). None of these observations present new information, but they do represent a willingness to discuss what has always been present but rarely admitted, certainly not in any kind of positive light. In many ways, *Take Back the Word* offers a refreshing antidote to the whitewashing that infects even the best standard biblical commentaries. Other essays rely not on the recasting of historical realities but on contemporary queer readings of Bible stories at the level of plot and character.

The Subversive Gospel, authored by one of the previous volume's contributors, attempts to provide a coherent reading of the entire New Testament from the liberating perspective of sexual minorities, sex workers, the ill, the physically challenged, and all those who fall outside the mainstream of "assigned power" in American culture (in this case, Central and South American). Originally written in Spanish by a Presbyterian minister now working with sexual minorities in Central and South America, *The Subversive Gospel* offers many valuable insights into the New Testament's radically liberating perspective, but the ungainly format and the belligerent stance of the author make retrieving them a labor of love. One cannot help but admire the ambition of the book, attempting as it does to recover a gospel directed first to those disenfranchised from Jesus' own society and still from ours, but the result is something more helpfully used as a reference work than for a single read-through from beginning to end. The author admits that the format and ordering of the book were a concern for both him and his editors; between them, they could not seem to agree on the book's audience. Nevertheless, any students of liberating theologies interested in finding biblical precedents