5-1-1999

# Models for interpretation of Scripture

Henry Langknecht

(267), "cenrury" (306)], grammatical ["the Deuteronomistic introduction and conclusion *is* eliminated" (181)], and punctuational [the abbreviation, i.e., is consistently not followed by a comma] errors within the 2nd edition. I also remain mystified why the lion's head from the entrance to the shrine of Ishtar from Nimrud was chosen by the publisher to grace the paperback's cover. There seems to be no connection to or even mention of it in the text or index.

Roger W. Uitti
Lutheran Theological Seminary


## Models For Interpretation of Scripture
John Goldingay
Grand Rapids:  William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and Carlisle, United Kingdom:  Paternoster Press, 1995
x + 328 pages, $27.50 Softcover


Every Christian preacher or teacher is constantly faced with the task of interpreting the Bible. In both formal preparation (sermons, Bible studies, lectures, essays, and meditations) and in informal conversations (pastoral care settings and moments of prayer) we work to bring scripture to bear on the world(s) within and without the Church. Although we know intuitively that our interpretation of scripture must be creative, flexible, and (at times, at least) done "off the cuff", most of us find ourselves working primarily from one foundational approach. For most readers of this journal that is likely to be historical critical exegesis seasoned, perhaps, with some tools from various literary critical methods. Yet we also know, just from browsing the shelves at the bookstore and reading through denominational "helps", that several methods—old and new—have garnered scholarly and ecclesiastical attention.

John Goldingay, in his book *Models For Interpretation of Scripture*, has undertaken the task of engaging and evaluating a broad range of interpretive methods. This book is a companion volume to his earlier work, *Models for Scripture* from which he adopts his own taxonomy of biblical genres: "witnessing tradition" (narrative); "authoritative canon" (*torah*); "inspired word" (prophecy); and "experienced revelation" (wisdom, psalm, parable, epistle). In the current work, he matches those broad categories to modes of interpretation that seem most fruitful in leading to the interpreter's final task—communication of gains made in understanding and meaning. In assembling interpretive models for analysis, Goldingay casts his net wide in

both time and space considering how the biblical authors themselves use scripture, and investigating such ancient methods as the *sensus plenior*, modern approaches such as deconstruction, and paying particular attention throughout to the contribution made by various hermeneutics of suspicion. In fact, this book would also make a nice preacher's companion to Robert Grant and David Tracy's *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*.

The book's seventeen chapters are divided into four sections, corresponding to the division of genres, and within each section, Goldingay considers his chosen interpretive models. One strategy for using the book might be to read the opening paragraph of each chapter. Here Goldingay poses some general questions for each model and something of the trajectory he will take in his dialogue with it. One quickly infers that Goldingay himself favours an interpretive approach which (a) rests on historical critical exegesis; (b) assumes an authoritative "place one might stand" to evaluate interpretation; and (c) favours expository preaching (it would have been good for him to admit these preferences more explicitly). Of course, these preferences are widely shared, and one strength of the book for most "mainline" preachers and teachers is that Goldingay's questions are similar to those we ourselves would ask (or have asked!). This reader did find his treatment of other models open, and even-handed, though readers more fully committed to philosophical, "suspicious", or "pre-critical" approaches may find Goldingay's preferences a stumbling block.

Henry Langknecht
Emmanuel College

## Hidden Sayings of Jesus: Words attributed to Jesus outside the four Gospels
William Morrice
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997
250 pages

This book presents "a fairly comprehensive, though not exhaustive" collection of 253 extracanonical sayings of Jesus in English, each graded from A to D according to its probable authenticity. It includes a brief survey of the formation of the New Testament canon and a rationale of the author's methodology. The individual sayings, each followed by a very brief commentary, are drawn from a wide range of sources, including New Testament variant readings, the Gospel of Thomas, apocryphal gospels, early patristic literature, and the Koran.