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The phallacy of Genesis: a feminist-psychoanalytic approach

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patriarchy. Having a male author attempt to deal seriously with his patriarchal tradition is one of the first steps towards its salvation.

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The Phallacy of Genesis: A Feminist-Psychoanalytic Approach

Ilona N. Rashkow

Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993

144 pp. \$22.00

Ilona Rashkow's study is representative of the "new" literary criticism which sets aside questions about authors and the history of the text, and attempts to read the Hebrew Bible by combining reader-response criticism with psychoanalytic and feminist approaches. These methodologies were developed in literary studies generally during the seventies and eighties and are expected to influence the way we read the Hebrew Bible in this decade.

Rashkow views interpretation to be based on a reader's personal response, "assumptions and biases", and takes her own feminist stance as a starting-point, granting "a privileged status to the experiences and interests of the female biblical characters". Though she tries to "read Freud and the Bible concurrently", she sporadically submits the biblical texts to the authority of Freudian theory (pp. 110-111).

Rashkow's application of Freud's psychoanalytic idea of "transference" to the wife-sister stories (Genesis 12, 20; pp. 26-48) is forced and obscures her discussion. Though she rightly stresses the importance of relating a text to similar texts, she arbitrarily omits the third wife-sister story (Genesis 26). Biblical scholars, employing traditional literary criticism, have always related the three stories, arguing that they are the work of different authors. But Rashkow, following secular literary theorists, replaces the word "authors" with "intertextuality" to reflect the dynamic interaction between text and reader. She writes clearly and convincingly about Abraham's sexual exploitation of his wife, identifying with Sarah who is "powerless" and with the foreign rulers who are more "just" than a patriarch.

Rashkow applies Freudian "night dream" theory to Abimelech's dream (Genesis 20) in order to resolve the contradictions in the story (pp. 49-64). She argues that the dream sequence represents the conscious resolution (20:4-7) of Abimelech's unconscious and unfulfilled desires to have sexual relations with Sarah (20:3). Her analysis is intriguing and resolves the contradiction in the dream sequence. However, it requires her to suppress the literal sexual connotation by introducing a contrived distinction between "taking Sarah" (20:2-3) and "taking a wife" (12:19).

Rashkow appropriates Freud's seduction theory as a tool for understanding the relations of daughters and fathers in Genesis (pp. 65–84). She also deals with the theme of female sexuality by juxtaposing Freud and biblical texts (pp. 85–109). Her arguments are provocative, but some readers will be shocked and put off by her repeated reading of father-daughter incest, including the first father-daughter seduction in Genesis 1–3.

Since Rashkow reads the Hebrew Bible as a single literary work, her approach will hardly satisfy Lutherans who have a high regard for the historical-critical method. But she does provide a new way of reading the text as it stands independent of historical concerns.

Rashkow's book lacks organization, and constant use of brackets interrupts the flow of her argument. Nevertheless, her analysis adds to the ever-growing body of neo-Freudian feminist scholarship, and provokes new questions of familiar biblical texts.

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Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens

Bruce W. Winter

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/Carlisle, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1994

ix + 245 pp.

Seek the Welfare of the City is part of the series "First Century Christians in the Greco-Roman World". In this volume Winter, a member of Cambridge University's Divinity Faculty, asserts that the Old Testament injunction to "seek the welfare of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7) provided a paradigm for teaching civic consciousness among first century Christians. By drawing together Greco-Roman and New Testament evidence Winter seeks to map out the roles played by early Christians in the *politeia*—public life—of their cities.

In Part One: Christians as Benefactors (chapters 1–4) Winter examines passages from 1 Peter, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Timothy to show that "Christian teaching endorsed the role of benefactor" (p. 2). Public "good works" were encouraged as a God-given responsibility as well as a means of refuting malicious rumours about Christians. The definition of benefactor was expanded to include all Christians capable of working to support themselves and their families, while actual benefactions were limited to those who were truly needy.

What is missing from Winter's discussion of Christians as benefactors is an examination of the role of women. Although both Greco-Roman