

ethic is Jewish if it makes references to basic Jewish texts. Yet by restricting those texts to one subgenre, that of rabbinic *halakha*, Newman is perpetuating a narrowness of view that his book often deplors. A Jewish ethic might well be understood more broadly as any moral system that identifies its principles and conclusions with texts honoured in the Jewish past or present. A Jewish system of moral reflection based on pietistic writings would, thus, be as much inalienably Jewish as one based on the classic Jewish legal works of the Talmud and the writings of medieval rabbis. As I have suggested in several of my own writings (*A New Jewish Ethic*, 1983; *Covenant and Community in Modern Judaism*, 1989; and *Toward a Jewish (M)Orality*, 1998), none of which Newman cites, a contemporary Jewish ethical system may use the techniques of the tradition to create an entirely new edifice.

Despite this assumption of some inherently fundamental Judaic morality, Newman's book shows a clear and accurate understanding of the current state of Jewish moral reflection, particularly in North America. His work should be a point of departure for those who seek an academic, rather than parochial, vision of the significance of the recent flurry of ethical writing by Jewish thinkers and scholars.

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*The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide.* By Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. ISBN 0-8006-3123-4. Pp. 642.

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Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz's *The Historical Jesus* (*Der historische Jesus. Ein Lehrbuch*, 1996) fully justifies its English subtitle. It is comprehensive in its clear, intelligent treatment of every important source, topic, and interpretive option in modern Historical Jesus Research (HJR). It is, moreover, a guide that will be useful to many classes of reader. For those of us who teach HJR, the book is not only a marvellous resource, it is also a deliberate challenge to more varied and appropriate pedagogies. For advanced students, the work is not only an ideal syllabus (e.g., for comprehensive examinations), it is also constantly and candidly suggestive (e.g., for seminar or even dissertation topics) without ever appearing opinionated.

The purpose of the work is to inform readers of the content of HJR and to initiate them into the scholarly process. The senior author, Gerd Theissen (Professor of New Testament at the University of Heidelberg), is easily the German New Testament scholar who is best known and most influential in North America today. Readers acquainted with his prior work will discern his interests and voice—there is no pretence of Olympian detachment—but will also recognize the restraint and balance of an author who knows his personal views are well represented elsewhere. We are told that “Annette Merz wrote

around one-third of the book" (ix, n. 1); however, would-be redaction critics will be hard-pressed to distinguish two authorial hands.

The book is divided into relatively self-contained topical sections: good indexes and tables of contents mitigate the inevitable slight arbitrariness in the authors' distribution of material across topical headings. I sometimes wished for more cross-referencing. Sections begin with a bibliography and a general orientation. Main points are high-lighted, sub-sections are also graphically well set-off, and the authors often supply additional tables when appropriate. The whole is carefully designed to bring key material to the eye. Each main section concludes with a summary, and usually some hermeneutical reflections and tasks designed both to crystallize understanding and to provoke further questioning (an appendix offers "Solutions" to some of these, 573–612). Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic quotations are always translated.

For North American undergraduate students and general readers, these virtues of comprehensiveness and critical suggestiveness are perhaps also the book's most serious faults. There is also a, perhaps daunting, German-ness to this *Lehrbuch*, though it is very well-served by its translator, John Bowden. Most English-language readers should welcome a guide so largely written by one who knows and has deeply influenced the explosion of North American HJR, but who also enjoys some distance from it.

I have not yet used the book directly in teaching undergraduates, but have recommended it for use as a resource in essay preparation. In this context all but the most determined undergraduate students found it difficult to meet the challenge of a guide that is more a map than an itinerary. Still, all caught some of the excitement of such an ambitious survey, so deftly executed. For undergraduate classes in HJR, I would therefore strongly recommend this as a teacher's guide and students' reference work rather than as a required textbook. (I have in the past successfully used Theissen's experiment in imaginative/narrative history *The Shadow of the Galilean* [1987] in the latter role: the two volumes would make an interesting contrast.)

In a field of research and writing that has long elicited the very best and the very worst in scholarship, this work must surely establish for some time to come a much-needed benchmark. This book is an essential addition to any personal or institutional library with more than two titles on Historical Jesus Research.

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*Argument and Theology in 1 Peter: The Origins of Christian Paraenesis.* By Lauri Thurén. JSNT Supplement Series 114. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995. ISBN 1-85075-546-9. Pp. 251.

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The apparent lack of distinctiveness of early Christian *paraenesis*—practical moral teaching—with respect to the other ethical instruction of the same period