

merits rereading as much to understand Landy's mind and thought as to comprehend the books under discussion.

Several of the essays dealing with biblical texts employ the method of tracing the progress of an image or series of images in order to show the development of thought in a text or, in some cases, the use of symbols to express incoherence, as with the carrying out of Isaiah's vocation to speak and not be understood (190). Landy undertakes to show how difficult passages can be read as parts of an original whole rather than consenting to the fragmentation of historical-critical analysis, which extracts awkward verses as inserted by a different, later author or editor. He reads biblical poetry as if it consists largely of longer unified passages, however difficult, rather than of edited collections of fragments. This makes it possible for the reader to recover the meaning in some of the more challenging passages and is one of the more congenial aspects of these essays for me.

While he has much that is original to offer, Landy constantly refers to works of contemporary biblical scholarship, as well as to psychological criticism. His dialogue with other scholars offers a summary of the issues under discussion, often in considerable detail, with lengthy footnotes frequently occupying half the page. His work is clearly aimed at other scholars, familiar with the material. I enjoy his critical readings primarily for his poetic sensitivity, which is able to reveal the interior workings of biblical texts. I would be happy to share the essays in this book with fellow scholars or to recommend it to those with less familiarity with academic scholarship, with the proviso that it is frequently intellectually challenging, as well as stimulating.

Mary Louise Mitchell

McGill University

Numbers 21-36. The Anchor Bible. By Baruch A. Levine. New York: Doubleday, 2000. ISBN 0-385-41256-8. Pp. xxii+614.

This present volume brings to completion Levine's massive commentary on Numbers. The format follows the one familiar from the earlier volume with a full translation, followed by a continuation of his introduction to the Book of Numbers as a whole, which deals sequentially with the two major sources JE and P in terms of their basic units or themes "in context." The commentary follows the ordering of the Bible itself but various parts and sub-units pay attention to the source divisions of literary criticism to which he subscribes. Each major unit of the commentary has a brief literary-critical introduction, followed by the translation for that unit and notes of a philological or grammatical nature. This in turn is followed by a series of comments on geographic, historical, cultic and other subjects, often in the nature of lengthy digressions. Needless to say the work contains a wealth of information on topics that in his view have some relationship with the Book of Numbers.

Levine's source analysis is heavily dependent, as he readily admits, upon G. B. Gray's Numbers Commentary of 1903 in the ICC series, especially for his treatment of JE. There is no attempt to bring this literary discussion up to date, however, and continental scholarship has been largely ignored. If there is any literary debate within the work it is with those Jewish and Israeli scholars who advocate a pre-D dating for the Priestly Code and here Levine is a pains to constantly point out the evidence in P for a late second temple, post-D dating of this source. One exception to the older source analysis is his treatment of the Balaam story in Numbers 22-24 for which he invents a new Transjordanian source (T). This allows him to engage in a most extensive discussion of this unit, including a detailed treatment of the Deir 'Alla texts that record the oracles and activity of a late eighth century Balaam son of Beor in the mid-Transjordanian region. Levine attempts to explain the relationship between these recently discovered texts and the biblical Balaam tradition and to speculate on the historical *Sitz im Leben* that lies behind each level of the tradition. A similar attempt to fit archaeological and epigraphic data together with the biblical text is made in the case of the conquest of Sihon's kingdom in Numbers 21. While Levine is critical of the older methods of biblical archeology, his own attempts to interpret biblical texts in their "historical" context is not much different and equally problematic.

A short review does not permit one to delve very deeply into the provocative aspects of this commentary. My chief complaint is that his controversial new theories on the JE corpus are made to rest on very brief, outmoded literary analysis with no attention to the current debate on these issues. To take one example, in the matter of similarities between the accounts of the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og in Numbers 21 and Deuteronomy 2-3, they are dismissed with the old excuse that Deuteronomy is an alternate version or dependent upon JE, although it is admitted that the Og account is Deuteronomistic and an addition to Numbers. In the current form of the debate on these texts, which he completely ignores, that explanation will no longer do. If the JE texts are in fact later than Deuteronomy, as many scholars now believe, then Levine's whole reconstruction is made problematic. Furthermore, the poem in Numbers 21:27-30, which Levine rightly regards as originally independent, does not have to do with Omri's attack on Moab, as he claims, but must be associated with events in the late seventh century BCE as reflected in the parallel oracle in Jeremiah 48:45-46. It is borrowed by the writer of Numbers 21 because of the reference in it to Sihon.

While these brief remarks do not do justice to the work's extensive useful philological notes and the full discussion on the priestly cultus, which is Levine's specialty, the commentary remains a rather narrow idiosyncratic study. The bibliography betrays how limited it is in areas outside his own expertise and is not very useful as a current guide to the literature on Numbers. Much of it is dominated by references to numerous articles in the Anchor Bible Dictionary instead of basic studies and monographs. It even lacks the most basic listing of older commentaries of Numbers. Nevertheless it will remain a valu-

able resource for what it does contain that is useful in Levine's study of the P corpus of the Pentateuch.

John Van Seters

Waterloo, ON

The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology: The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Mysticism in Modern Russian Trinitarian Thought (from Solovyov to Bulgakov). By Michael Aksionov Meerson. Studies in Franciscanism.. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1998. ISBN 0-81-990987-4. Pp.xx + 255.

"God is an absolute being because He is the substantial act of love, act-substance. God, or the Truth, not only has love but, above all, 'God is love, *ho Theos agape estin*' (I. John 4:8, 16). That is, love is God's essence." So wrote Pavel Florensky in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, his monumental meditation on the relation of truth to the Church as a sharing in the perichoretic life of love of the Holy Trinity. Florensky is one of many Russian thinkers analyzed by Fr. Meerson in his important study of Augustinian love mysticism in modern Russian thought. Meerson is an appropriate author to exegete this tradition, for he comes out of it himself, having studied at two of its best known institutions in the West (i.e. Institut de Theologie Orthodoxe Saint-Serge of Paris and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary of Crestwood, NY). He is also interested in a dialogue with western theology (*The Trinity of Love [etc.]* 1-19, 189-192), and like Bulgakov, Florensky and, more recently, Alexander Men, he has combined Christian faith with political action: evident, for example, in his running of a religious *samizdat* press from 1965-1972.

Borrowing from Western medieval love mysticism, which itself drawn from the Trinitarian theology of Augustine, as well as German Idealism, Russian theology fashioned a conception of reality that saw God and all else patterned after him. In particular, the consciousness of the person is thought to be made in the *imago Trinitatis*, as *sobornyi* or conciliar in its very being. To be *sobornyi* is to find one's life not in the solitary ego (e.g. Max Stirner's "Unique One" as an "exclusive I"), nor in the love-as-selfishness of *I* mirroring *I* (e.g. Donne's amorous solipsism of "The Sun Rising"), but in a life of sacrificial lifting, emptying and giving up of oneself as *I* to another *Thou* who presupposes a *he*, both of whom transcend one's own transcendent existence as a physical, intellectual and spiritual being. Only in God as the Absolute Subject is this sobornal reality complete as a Trinity of persons mutually encountering one another in a kenotic circle of indwelling love. Yet God does not remain locked up in himself, for creation is his gift of this sobornal reality to another beside himself. The one who is the exemplification and mode of this call to ever greater loving unity is Jesus Christ as the God-man in whom the spiritual and material worlds are united in one voice of praise to God.