

THE COLLEGEVILLE BIBLE COMMENTARY NEW TESTAMENT, based on the New American Bible. General Editor R.J. Karris, O.F.M., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1992, pp 861–1300. paperback.

The individual booklet commentaries on the New Testament in the Collegeville series have been revised and reissued in a single volume. It is a reliable basic commentary for use in private reading or bible study in groups, similar in level and helpfulness to Anthony Harvey's *Companion to the NEB New Testament*. The commentators are distinguished scholars, including the likes of Daniel Harrington, Jerome Neyrey and George MacRae.

The commentary is "self-contained", in the sense that it hardly ever refers to alternative views, or other literature. So, one never feels oppressed by the weight of scholarship, but conversely one is offered no help on where to find other answers, or answers to other questions, raised by the text.

Apart from the occasional quotation from Vatican II or Newman, one would hardly guess the commentary was Roman Catholic; on issues such as Thou Art Peter, the "brothers" of Jesus, or the Woman clothed with the sun, it does not take sides. This is ecumenical, historical scholarship, and to that degree all the more catholic, in the other sense of the word.

There is little by way of "devotional" comment, or even, with rare exceptions, expressions of opinion. This makes for a rather bland, matter-of-fact style, which may well be what is needed to stimulate readers to add their own personal reflections as they use the commentary.

Perhaps the liveliest of the contributions are those by the two women scholars, Mary Ann Getty and PHEME PERKINS. Both entertainingly compare scripture to film, the Corinthian correspondence is quite like a "soap opera"; Revelation is more like a "disaster movie". Similarly, Neal Flanagan attempts to read the Fourth Gospel as dramatic script.

The oddest feature of the commentary is the order in which the books of the New Testament are arranged. The Gospels appear first, in the normal sequence, even though Marcan priority is accepted; but John has the Johannine Epistles as an appendix. Acts comes next, followed by the authentic Paulines but arranged neither in canonical nor chronological order. The disputed Paulines come next, presumably in the order of their degree of disputedness, though the writers are quite clear that 2 Thess and Colossians are not by Paul. Lastly come the bulk of the catholic epistles, and Hebrews joining Revelation in bringing up the rear. "Re-arrange the New Testament documents and give reasons for your re-arrangement." would make quite a good question in an M.Phil. examination. But I would advise the casual reader simply to ignore this quirk, and consult the contents page, when in difficulty!

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