

An Introduction to the Gospels and Acts. By Alicia D. Myers. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. xvii + 210. \$24.95.

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Myers's contribution to the Essentials of Biblical Studies series is an accessible, sophisticated introduction to the New Testament narratives and their history of interpretation. The book covers not only the canonical Gospels and Acts but also apocryphal texts, as well as sociopolitical, literary, and material history. Myers shows that the work of modern New Testament readers is part of a continuous interpretive conversation that began as soon as the earliest stories about Jesus and his followers started circulating, a conversation that has been and is shaped by each interpreter's context.

Intended for an audience of beginners, the book helps newcomers become acquainted with narrative-critical and audience-critical approaches. Myers's clear and information-packed introduction explains these approaches and simultaneously alerts readers to the fact that many other hermeneutical lenses could be applied to the New Testament and, in fact, have been applied throughout the history of interpretation. The tone is erudite but conversational. Most chapters include a helpful outline of the focal text that could help new readers quickly locate a particular pericope (e.g., Gospel of Luke on page 78). Myers ends the book with several "Lessons for Reading the New Testament," reminding readers that this monograph simply offers an entrée into the wider world of New Testament studies. She also promises that further study would offer benefits to readers in today's world: "Continuing to contextualize these writings and think about their history of interpretation enables us to understand our own contexts better, if not our own beliefs" (166).

The first six chapters each explore a single text. Myers begins by attending to the context of the focal text's composition, then proceeds to discuss its major literary features and key themes or passages that offer some insight into the evangelist's goals. Chapter 7 on the apocryphal gospels and acts offers a brief but masterful discussion of canon formation, then provides an overview of content and themes that appear in the early noncanonical writings, which she says might be compared to fan fiction (156).

Perhaps most impressive is Myers's ability to pack significant detail into just over 200 short pages of prose without distracting from each chapter's main points. For example, she opens the chapter "Mark's Story" with a paragraph offering readers advice about how to approach the text; she seamlessly incorporates information about early Christian reading practices and where chapter and verse divisions came from (16).

The book also offers a clear snapshot of some essential features of New Testament studies as a field. First, Myers consistently attends to differences of scholarly opinion, demonstrating that not all interpreters agree. She presents various hypotheses in evenhanded fashion, positioning herself as a resource and prompting readers to form their own opinions about the evidence. Examples can be found in the discussion of Q on pages 12–13 or the list of possible identities for the Beloved Disciple on pages 114–15. Second, she highlights several different contemporary hermeneutical approaches. In her chapter on Luke, Myers illustrates how a gospel’s unique themes can inspire specific avenues of engagement: “Luke’s depiction of Jesus’s compassion for marginalized people, combined with the negative characterizations of the rich and powerful, make it a perfect text to combine with a closer look at aspects of identity in the Roman world such as class, gender, ethnicity, and disabilities” (67). Finally, Myers does not shy away from addressing essential ethical issues associated with biblical interpretation, directly confronting the anti-Semitism that is part of the New Testament’s reception history (61–63, 121, 159).

The volume has limitations. The most significant of these is its implicit focus on Western (European) culture and history of interpretation, reflected in the book’s bibliography and the scholars mentioned in the body of the text. Given the stated goals of the Essentials of Biblical Studies series editors—to provide new introductory texts that are responsive to significant demographic changes in biblical scholarship, biblical studies classrooms, and the publishing industry—I was surprised that Myers does not meaningfully engage work from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups of interpreters.

This concise and helpful book, suitable for students and casual readers, provides an engaging introduction to New Testament interpretation and its rewards.

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Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of Laudato Si’. By Dermot A. Lane. New York: Paulist Press, 2021. 176 pages. \$29.95 (paper).

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In *Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of Laudato Si’*, author Dermot Lane seeks to bring integral ecology and integral theology into dialogue using the lens of *Laudato Si’* as a guide. Lane argues that historically