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Alain Marchadour, David Neuhaus. *The Land, the Bible, and History: "Toward the Land That I Will Show You".* New York: Fordham University Press, 2006. 232 pp. $40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8232-2659-7.

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The Holy and Troubled Land

In *The Land, the Bible, and History,* Alan Marchadour and David Neuhaus, professors of scripture, offer a careful and wide-ranging discussion of the role of the Holy Land in biblical material, church fathers and history, and documents of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council through the papacy of John Paul II. It is a systematic and balanced reading of primary materials on the Holy Land. Their collection and analysis is a timely contribution for understanding the historical background to the history of the Middle East, particularly Israel. Marchadour and Neuhaus emphasize that their perspective is overtly Roman Catholic and their work is addressed especially, though not exclusively, to Christians who see how "what goes on in the Land divides and creates conflicts among Christians" (p. 2). The breadth of the book provides an invaluable corrective to misinformation and might well diffuse some of the conflicts that have arisen over the hotly contested issue of Israel.

The book is divided into three parts: the first is an analysis of scriptural materials about the Land, the second focuses on the writings of the church fathers and history, and the third is devoted to contemporary documents of the Catholic Church on Jews and the Land. In part 1, the authors examine the "Land as it is presented throughout the biblical narrative" (p. 2). They present exegetical reflection through a synchronic survey of all materials in the Old Testament, from Genesis to late Wisdom. The book covers all threads on the Land found in the Old Testament, yet the work is never overwhelming in detail. Instead, it includes helpful inserts, such as, for example, "Jerusalem and Babylon," that pinpoint salient issues in the Bible. Particularly strong are the analyses of Genesis, Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic history, and the prophet Jeremiah's mourning over the destruction of the Land.

There is, however, one weakness in this section. The exegesis of Joshua betrays no analysis of the contested status of the Land between the Israelites and the Canaanites; one will get the Land, while the other will die. This bloody conquest receives only cursory reflection in this section, as well as in part 3 in which the authors examine the legacy of competing peoples over the Land in the modern Middle East. There also is no contrast between the violent, wholesale conquest model of Judges with the gradual, piecemeal settlements also in Judges. The process is peaceful, with Israelites and Canaanites living side by side, with only intermittent, local skirmishes breaking out. Most historians concur that the Judges account is more historically accurate, yet even without the diachronic view, Marchadour and Neuhaus flatten the diversity of Old Testament perspectives, thereby bypassing a fruitful tradition about mutual occupation of the Land.

The primary theme that emerges from their study of Old Testament materials is that the Land is not an absolute gift, but rather a space in which Israel can embody faithfulness to Torah. The authors stress the dialectic within the Old Testament of a movement from Wilderness to Land, and Land to Wilderness, to argue for the tentative character of dwelling in the Holy Land.

Discussing New Testament materials, Marchadour and Neuhaus switch from a synchronic, exegetical survey to a thematic approach. The change in approach is confusing and results in less textual analysis. It also risks distortion, since the themes are now the lens through which the authors analyze biblical texts. The authors cite three primary strands in New Testament writings: continuity with the Old Testament, rejection and spiritualization, and transformation of the concept of the Land through the person of Jesus Christ. Of these, the third theme is the least developed, and the second is somewhat problematic. Marchadour and Neuhaus state that the death and resurrection of Jesus forever changed the Christian attitude to the Land. Jesus's victory over death in effect

opened up "a universal dimension by which every land, across the entire face of the earth, is called to become a 'Holy Land"' (p. 3).

This universalizing of the particular, the Land, is common among Christian interpreters in large measure because it supports the Gentile expansion of Christianity from Paul's missionary activity to the present. In other words, the missional activity of the church is advanced, but at the expense of the particular, the Land. Yet the concrete Land of Israel does matter, for the ministry of Jesus concentrates only on the Jewish people of his homeland, Israel. A glaring omission, at this point, is the lack of any discussion of Paul's letters. The authors address the Gospels, Acts, Hebrews, and Revelation, but not Paul, in this thematic analysis of the New Testament. At the very least, Romans 9-11 on the status of Israel needed to be included. It is there that Paul describes the Gentile inclusion, the *universal*, asgrafted onto a branch of the olive tree, the *particular*, Israel. At no point in Paul does the Land become subsumed in a generalized understanding of the entire world. In fact, the Gentile inclusion depends on Israel's foundation for its nourishment. The Holy Land remains the Holy Land, perhaps even the holiest of lands. Through it, the greater world is converted to Christianity.

Part 2 examines the Land in Christian tradition from the church fathers until the Second Vatican Council. It is thorough and nuanced in its discussion of major writings of the church fathers and the history of pilgrimage, the Crusades, and Muslim incursion in the Land. In both parts 2 and 3, the analysis broadens to the question of the Jews rather than the land per se. In part, this is due to how the church fathers dealt with the concept of the Holy Land. In addition,the authors do an excellent job of recounting historical developments of the church in relation to the Holy Land without resorting to indictment. The section on church writings from the Second Vatican Council forward is particularly strong and sensitive. It takes into account how events in the twentieth century have understandably altered Christian attitudes toward the Land of the Bible; namely, the Holocaust, the formation of the State of Israel, the War of Independence and subsequent wars, and the dilemma of Palestinian displacement. Obviously, this subject area is fraught with complexities and Marchadour and Neuhaus do a stellar job navigating through the issues. In fact, the successful treatment in part 2 enables them to build on their discussion of how to understand the Land today.

Part 3 examines the Land in documents of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council through the papal writings of John Paul II. Marchadour and Neuhaus present both constructive and creative theological reflection on the Land for the future of the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Their suggestions for the future are sensitive to history, ecumenism, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. They focus on two essential theological concerns: ecumenical dialogue and the pertinent concerns of the church for peace and justice. In so doing, their work is both a hopeful and informed perspective on the future of the Land.

Marchadour and Neuhaus address the complicated issue of the Holy Land today from the standpoint of Catholic theology, as distinct from political, sociological, or partisan approaches, of which there are many. It is ideally aimed at the interested, compassionate Christian who is often baffled and dismayed by the ongoing violence in the Holy Land. As such, it will have a broad audience, from church study groups of both the Bible and interfaith dialogue, to Christian tour programs in the Holy Land, and to college courses on the Middle East and religious history. With the ongoing history of strife in the region, *The Land, the Bible, and History* is a timely and important work.

I have two minor quibbles about the book. First, the Madaba map of Jerusalem on the book's cover is the only map in the entire book. Since the authors wish to inform Christians about current discussions on the Holy Land, a few clear maps would have strengthened the discussion. Knowing, for example, that Jordan is relatively close to Israel or even that the Holy Land is roughly the size of New Jersey, helps the reader contextualize the issue. And this relates to my second quibble. With the increased aggression of Iran in recent years, through Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territory, the issue of security of the Land from Islamic extremists has become increasingly pointed. Mahmoud Ahmadinajad, Iran's president, has routinely threatened to blow the Land off the map, and is procuring the nuclear capability to do so. I believe that subsequent editions of this fine work would benefit from discussion of this issue in relation to ecumenical dialogue among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, concerns for peace in the Land.

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