BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Michael Franklin, *Liberating Visions: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African American Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 169 pp., Index, ix pp.

Robert Michael Franklin's *Liberating Visions* treats the moral thought and the societal visions of four of the most influential persons in the history of Black America: Booker T. Washington, the late 19th and early 20th century Tuskegee Institute president, race leader, accommodationist, and adviser to two American presidents; W.E.B. DuBois, the educator and intellectual, advocate of Black and female civil rights and inclusion into mainstream society, philosopher, sociologist, pan-Africanist, and a founder of the Niagara Movement and later the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Malcolm X, later known as El Hajj Malik El Shabazz, minister of the Nation of Islam, advocate of black nationalism and cultural pride, and critic of the Kingian Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s; and Martin Luther King, Jr., author, pastor, and leader of the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement which focused upon eradicating *de jure* and *de facto* racial segregation, discrimination, and a proponent for the radical reorganization of society to eliminate poverty and its attendant ills.

In his introduction Franklin clearly sets forth his methodology and theses which he proceeds to explore and demonstrate in the four remaining chapters of the book devoted to each of the men: Washington, DuBois, Malcolm, and King. In the fifth chapter he analyzes the public morality and societal vision of each of these persons and defends his earlier thesis that King's theology/philosophy represents the most holistic and theologically acceptable construction. The author consistently supports

a thesis that the four persons outlined in his study have made very clear and significant contributions to public morality and social theory which should not go unexamined and unutilized in any serious attempt to understand America's social and intellectual history.

Franklin rightly contends that while these four men concentrated their efforts on social justice toward eliminating unjust structures and biases of American society, their public discourses were significant contributions in the direction of commenting upon "the substantive content and formal character of the authentically free life and moral person" (p. 1). According to the author, these writers reveal that true human fulfillment not only requires the transformation of society which enables individuals to seek opportunity in the political and economic realms; true human fulfillment also requires the transformation of the individual on the personal level. But Franklin insists that these four Black moralists must not be intellectually segregated from the wider intellectual tradition. In pursuit of proving the worthiness and compatibility of that inclusion, Franklin selects two significant moral philosophers — William Galston, author of *Justice and the Human Good,* and the Harvard philosopher, John Rawls, author of *A Theory of Justice.* Galston is relevant to the study of these four men's thoughts because he focuses upon the rights of people to have access to "four categories of allocable goods" (p. 6): those comprising the political and economic sphere, and those relating to recognition and personal development. Rawls' philosophy is relevant to the public stances of the four men in that he updates the social contract theory so that it is established upon the principles of "political liberty and social-economic fairness," a system which links the security of the well-off with the less fortunate (p. 6).

Franklin proceeds through the four main chapters by grouping his discussion of each of the four men according to four components: 1) a one word metaphor which summarizes or characterizes the overall thought of the individual; 2) a biographical sketch of the individual; 3) an analysis of how

each thinker conceived of human fulfillment; 4) and each thinker's vision of the "Just Society." Washington is termed the "adaptive" person who subordinates a radical insistence on political and civil rights to the immediate attainment of economic freedom and empowerment. Washington, the author reveals, insists that religion should be "pragmatic," geared to the this-worldly economic needs of the black masses and that education should be that type which prepares the person to make a practical living and help support his/her family. Du Bois's thought encourages the development of the "strenuous" person, one who constantly strives and agitates for his/her full political and civic rights. Dubois also encouraged economic empowerment and subscribed to a religious worldview that, while spiritually rich, was directed more toward the rational understanding of reality than perhaps that of Washington. Malcolm X or El Hajj Malik El Shabazz's vision of the complete person was the "defiant" person. He rejected both the religion and the civic idealism of his counterpart, the Reverend Dr. King. In defiance of all ideas, religious or otherwise, which he saw as enslaving Blacks, Malcolm stressed Black nationalism and adherence to a code of strict personal discipline. Even after his break with the Nation of Islam and his embrace of more traditional, orthodox Islam, Malcolm still insisted that Blacks, even in coalition with white sympathizers, must seek political power and economic self-determination for themselves, hold on to those religious traditions which liberated them from economic and political oppression, and strive to connect their own struggle as African Americans with their racial siblings in Africa.

King's vision of the truly fulfilled person was one who was "integrative," one who was eclectic in his/her appropriation of truth from various sources. King heartily embraced both the Christian tradition and the civic-political tradition of this country and used them as springboards or justifications for his effort to reform the economic landscape of the country so that poverty, inequity, and injustice would be eliminated.

Liberating Visions is a well-written, balanced, and original contribution

to American and African American theology/philosophy. Franklin's writing style is clear and direct; and his book demonstrates creativity, deep insight, and objectivity in dealing with conflicting viewpoints. He consistently and responsibly develops and supports his theses. His work will be of immense value for those interested in American/African American religious history and political thought, Black history, and those concerned with social ethics.

I do have some minor disagreements with a few of the author's interpretations, however. First, his portrayal of Booker T. Washington is perhaps a bit too sympathetic and uncritical. Franklin writes on page 36, "In assessing his leadership, we must credit him with the achievement of inviting, and thereby preparing, segments of white America for full Black political empowerment. In this light, we could conclude that Washington prepared the way for the uncompromising demands advanced by DuBois and others." Well, I beg to differ. Far from preparing "segments of white America for full Black poliical empowerment," Washington's words and public inaction served to undercut the efforts of many of his contemporaries to *retain* — let alone enlarge — any significant measure of Black political participation or empowerment. Furthermore, rather than preparing the way for DuBois's more radical postures, Washington, a tyrant, fought the DuBois camp "tooth and nail" in an effort to retain his own personal power and political influence. We may excuse Washington's naive assumption that Blacks would gain respect and regain political suffrage wrenched from them once they demonstrated to whites that they were economically self-reliant and indispensable to the Southern economy. We have the advantage of hindsight. We cannot excuse, however, his determination to stamp out all opposition to, and dissent from, his ideas and programs.

Second, the author in his treatment of King describes King's thought relative to "African-American Prophetic Christianity." If Franklin means that King stands within the tradition of a Black religious protest tradi-

tion, with his insistence that obedience and worship of God entail both obligations to God and humanity, especially those who are less fortunate, then I can support his discussion. But the author apparently means more than this. He writes on page 121, "For King, African-American prophetic Christianity was rooted in a biblical faith that affirmed the original goodness and divine sovereignty over creation." The author also argues on page 120, "We should note that King's proclivity to perceive the sacred and secular to be ineluctably intertwined is a common feature of traditional African religious culture. He was bearing faithful witness both to biblical faith and to the African spiritual tradition of which he was a product." These statements could leave the impression that King a) had some significant sense of his spiritual connection with African traditional religion and b) that he had an understanding of a prophetic tradition in African American religious history which advocated striving for temporal as well as spiritual salvation.

I have no doubt that there is some continuity of African spirituality in the Black experience and that there is definitely a strong, black prophetic religious tradition advocating temporal as well as spiritual change. Strange as it may seem, I seriously doubt that King had any significant understanding or appreciation of these facts; and I am almost convinced that he seldom if ever conveyed such knowledge publicly in word or print, which reinforces the first doubt. Since Franklin provided no footnote or bibliographic reference which would buttress his claim or analysis regarding this point, I modestly suggest that he is in danger of reading post-King scholarly interpretation of the Black Church back into the thought of King himself. Finally, Franklin should have furnished the reader with a selected bibliography, which may have served to blunt some of the criticism advanced above.

In conclusion, Franklin's *Liberating Visions*, despite these minor concerns, is a fine addition to scholarship concerning American and African American religious and social thought. I recommend it highly and en-

thusiastically and intend to employ it as a resource in my courses on American/African American Religious History and courses dealing with religion and social reform.

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Major Jones, *The Color of God: The Concept of God in Afro-American Thought* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 124 pp.

Some years ago as a graduate student at Union Theological Seminary I recall doing battle with the first book written by Major Jones, *Black Awareness: A Theology Of Hope.* Toward the end of the book Professor Jones wrote a chapter on "The Future Concept Of God in The Black Community." Here he indicated that he wanted to give more time and space to God-talk in the Black Community. In the meantime he wrote another book on Christian Ethics from a Black frame of reference and served as president of the Society for Christian Ethics in North America. But Jones has not been able to let go of this commitment to articulate clearly for us a theological understanding of God in the Afro-American tradition. Like Jacob in the Biblical story he could not let go until he received a blessing.

He has blessed us in this work which portrays a historical-philosophical account of Black people's attempt to talk about God from the perspective of the Black religious tradition. In seven clear chapters he narrates for us and offers constructive theological statements pertaining to the uniqueness of the concept of God in the Afro-American tradition. According to Dr. Jones, "Black theology is not separate and apart from other Christian theologies; it is rather a necessary and inseparable part of the total theological undertaking. There can therefore be no wholeness to the

theological discipline without a Black theological dimension" (p.3).

The first three chapters of the book reflect a descriptive-historical approach while chapters four through seven focus a normative-philosophical bent. It is in the latter portion of the work that Dr. Jones attempts his constructive statements. The starting point for Black-talk about God is that God is personal.

This personal God who is creatively free, independent, good and loving is also responsive. "Black personalism" advances the contention that God is a responsive personal being who knows and cares about each one of us, while ever maintaining—with Rahner—the cognitive humility required by the dark truth of God's personhood..." (p.50). The central question which the theology informed by Black personalism broaches is not does God exist? but rather, does God care enough to do something about suffering and evil? Professor Jones engages such diverse thinkers as Carter G. Woodson, William Jones, Benjamin E. Mays, John Hick, E.S. Brightman and Paul Schilling not only to suggest the centrality of the question does God care enough? but also to posit the faith claim that God does care enough because God is absolute power and absolute love. It is at this point that I do believe the work could be strengthened with a discussion of the nature of Christian love and how this relates to power. However, in chapters six and seven Dr. Jones hints at the connection between love and power as he engages in a discussion of Jesus Christ as the one who demonstrates that God participates in the stuff of history and the Holy Spirit who creates the conditions of grace. The Holy Spirit is the guarantor that God never leaves God's people alone.

It is this understanding of a God who is relevant to the Black religious situation, a God who participates in the existential situation of the Black community and is integral to the struggle to keep Black life human which Black theology takes as its starting point. This theological orientation pro-

vides the bedrock of a Black personalism and attests to Black theology as a theology of protest and revolutionary change.

Professor Jones has placed us in his debt with this signal contribution to the theological enterprise.

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J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament,* 3rd ed. The Old Testament Library. Translated by John Bowden (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), xxii+608 pp.

Soggin, a member of the Waldensian Theological faculty in Rome, has enjoyed a distinguished career for some time. His introduction to the Hebrew Bible has been recognized as one of the leading introductory texts on the subject published in the last quarter century. Previous editions have been well received and that reception is justifiable. This third English edition has been made from the fourth Italian edition.

The book is divided into six parts and contains two appendices. Part One addresses methods and problems related to the study of the Hebrew Bible, while Parts Two-Six discuss the biblical books in the canonical order. Part Six discusses the deutero-canonical books of the Catholic tradition, referred to as apocryphal by Protestant Christians. The appendices provide helpful information concerning inscriptions and papyri. The bibliographies at the end of each chapter are outstanding resources for the serious student of the Hebrew Bible. Soggin provides the reader with thorough discussions of the literary and historical questions for each biblical book.

The present edition constitutes significant revisions in his discussions

of the history and general problems associated with the Hebrew Bible, the pentateuch and the pre-exilic prophets. The book contains many minor revisions. As with the previous editions, Soggin has thoroughly updated his bibliographies, making his introductory text a valuable research tool.

Biblical scholarship is indebted to Prof. Soggin for this recent edition which incorporates discussions since the publication of the preceding edition and provides outstanding primary and secondary sources in its several bibliographies at the end of each chapter. Soggin's introductionary text remains a significant contribution to The Old Testament Library and an invaluable tool for beginning students of the Hebrew Bible.

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Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 245 pp.

Robert M. Grant, noted University of Chicago professor emeritus of New Testament and Early Christianity, discusses in this book the accusations against Christians and how Christians responded to those accusations in the second Christian century. In so doing, these early apologists at once defended their faith and contributed to the development of Christian theology, according to Grant. Grant urges persuasively that Graeco-Roman philosophy informed both sides of the debate.

Religious apologies in Graeco-Roman society were both public and political for two reasons. First, Graeco-Roman society did not separate religious affairs and public affairs. Second, the implications of religious apologies proposed significant changes for the re-structuring of the Graeco-Roman world (pp. 9-18, 74-82 and 182-190). Grant writes that apologetic literature in the Graeco-Roman period came from minority groups that

sought acceptance from the dominant Roman culture. These apologists did not identify with the dominant culture nor did they advocate confrontation with it. Rather, they argued that their minority culture held several ideas/concepts/virtues in common with the dominant culture. Thus, the dominant culture, at the very least, should exhibit some degree of respect for the minority perspective. Grant argues that an apologist in the Graeco-Roman era was too much a generalist for his/her own sub-culture and too specific for general society. The result was that the apologist was not at home in either context (pp. 9-10).

As a matter of course, the apologist had to respond to the dominant culture's accusations and/or perceptions of the minority groups. Graeco-Roman society accused the Christians of godlessness because they did not have images of their god nor temples in which to worship. Also, Christians were accused of sexual immorality (e.g., pp. 28-49; 133-139). Christian apologists responded by denigrating immorality among non-Christians and in turn articulating Christian ethical norms. These Christian standards reflected the influence of the biblical tradition and Stoicism, an important philosophical movement of the first two Christian centuries. Grant provides a good discussion of the thought of Justin Martyr, a good example of this blending of Jewish tradition and Graeco-Roman philosophy (pp. 50-73).

A distinctive contribution of this book is the manner in which Grant gives insights into both sides of the equation, the Christian and the non-Christian, providing the reader with valuable information concerning the nature of religious behavior and religious discourse in the second century of the common era.

This reviewer would add one small corrective: not all apologetic literature came from a minority perspective. In many cases, the dominant culture often sponsored apologetic histories in order to explain, defend and legitimize its action. The Romans, for example, sponsored the writing of Polybius' *Histories*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* and

Josephus' *Jewish War* to provide a rationale for Roman geopolitical dominance in the world at that time. This criticism of Grant, however, does not take away from an outstanding and meaningful study.

This book is a valuable contribution to the study of ancient philosophy, classics and the history of Christian thought. It provides a balanced, thorough presentation of the nature of the dialogue among Christians and non-Christians who were both students of classical literature.

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Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls In English,* 3rd ed., (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), xvi+320 pp.

Geza Vermes gives us a third installment (previous editions appeared in 1962 and 1975) of his introduction to and translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls that have been published thus far.

Vermes divides the work into five sections. The first section discusses the nature of the community while the following three sections supply translations of the rules, liturgical life and biblical exegesis of the community. All the translations are preceded by brief introductions. Vermes concludes with a brief "Miscellanea" on various topics of note.

There are some changes from the second edition which improve the organization and presentation of the material. For example, the notes on the texts are more concise and are placed with his other introductory comments in the first section. Also, the first section ably summarizes his companion work *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective,* rev. ed. (Fortress, 1981). The bibliography also has been updated. Finally, the Temple Scroll, heretofore unavailable to the community of scholarship, is included in this volume. (Unfortunately, many important texts from Qumran

remain "in escrow," so to speak, and scholars wait [after 40 years] for their publication.)

Vermes is an authority on this subject. *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* will serve as a valuable resource to understanding the Essenes, as well as its companion, *Qumran in Perspective*, and will prove to be helpful in undergraduate courses and introductory graduate courses on this topic.

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Ernst R. Wendland, *The Cultural Factor in Bible Translation: A Study of Communicating the Word of God in a Central African Cultural Context* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1987) 221 pp.

Ernst Wendland has presented a convincing study of how cultural factors play a vital role in the translation of the Bible into other languages. By suitable examples based on African languages such as Tonga and Chewa of Zambia, Wendland has clearly demonstrated how a literal translation of the Bible would either obscure the meaning or even become offensive (p.1). It is not enough simply to translate accurately from one language to another without taking into consideration the culture of the people who speak that language (p.3). In translating the Song of Solomon 1:2, Wendland shows how a literal translation of the Revised Standard Version would create problems for the Tonga people. Like the Tongas, Africans in general do not kiss each other. To kiss on the mouth, as referred to in the verse, would be confusing to the Tonga people as this would be both vulgar and repugnant. Only prostitutes would be associated with such lewd practices (p.2).

He then goes on to demonstrate how in the Song of Solomon 4, the Hebrew and English description of the beauty of a woman would be quite baffling to the Tonga people. The metaphors used to portray beauty, in

actual fact, portray a negative picture. To the Tonga, beauty is compared to the whiteness of milk or maize meal, not to doves which have red eyes which symbolize drunkenness or possession by witchcraft.

After stating his thesis so convincingly, Wendland throughout the remainder of the book elaborates his case with several examples based on the sociological perspectives of culture (p.5ff.). Every culture tries to answer enigmatic questions such as those relating to being (ontology), the organization of the universe (cosmology) and the manifestiation of knowledge (epistemology) (pp.11-12). All these issues have a direct bearing on humankind and every culture attempts to relate to them. This is why, Wendland asserts, biblical translators must take cultural differences in perception and perspective into serious consideration if the biblical message is to make an impact on every culture. In other words, "...both the Scriptures as well as Christian witness must be formulated in culturally comprehensive and relevant terms," Wendland emphasizes (p.11).

The only adverse remark I have about the book is its exclusive use of the male gender, (pp. 4,9,11,12,36,37). Wendland has not yet realized the beauty of an inclusive literary style. In spite of this shortcoming, Wendland's monograph is highly recommendable to Bible translators as well as to scholars and students engaged in the globalization of theological education and in missionary work in other lands.

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Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 222 pp.

This, the first book-length study of the use of irony in the Gospel of John, sets out "to clarify the substance and method of Johannine irony,

to delineate its forms...to ascertain its functions...and to ask why the Fourth Gospel makes such consistent use of this literary device" (pp. 1-2).

Duke takes up this task by first examining the nature of irony itself. Chapter 1 examines both the ancient literary conventions concerning irony and modern definitions and classifications of irony and its subtypes. Examples from both Greek and Hebrew literature are discussed. Irony is seen as a literary technique involving two levels of meaning that are in tension with each other, along with an element, whether real or pretended, of unawareness of the second level. Chapter 2 discusses the relation between author and audience that irony demands, and the uses of irony both as appeal and as weapon. Duke stresses the way in which irony creates a community between the author and the readers, who share in the knowledge of the two levels of meaning and enjoy the process of discovering the higher level, relying on the author's subtle, sometimes almost silent clues.

In examining specifically Johannine irony, Duke divides the material into "local" irony, occurring at a given point in the text, and "extended" irony, spread throughout a whole scene or even the entire work. Chapter 3 looks at local irony in the words of Jesus and of his disciples, and Chapter 4 treats local irony centered on Jesus' opponents. Only Jesus speaks intentional irony. His disciples may make assumptions, assertions, confessions, and promises that ironically misunderstand the true situation, or say more (or less) than the speaker intends, though they are portrayed less harshly than Jesus' opponents. The latter are shown as arrogantly claiming a knowledge they do not possess, or unintentionally attesting truths they do not believe, or causing results they wish to avoid. Specific techniques that signal the author's ironic intent include the use of repetition, questions (often unanswered), and (with the opponents) self-confidently emphatic assertions or questions that expect a negative answer. Themes treated ironically include especially Jesus' death, his origin, and his superiori-

ty to Israel's patriarchs, with particular themes often correlated with particular types of irony.

Chapter 5 examines extended irony of several sorts, in relation to the depiction of individual characters, failure to recognize Jesus' identity, the use of imagery, and the motifs of the gospel as a whole. The ironic techniques and themes discovered are similar to those of the local ironies, which indeed often form the materials out of which the extended ironies are built. Chapter 6 uses the methodology previously developed to study the extended irony in two especially important episodes, the story of the man born blind in John 9 and the trial of Jesus in John 18:28-19:16. In each case there is a sevenfold series of scenes, and in each case those who seek to condemn Jesus are instead—ironically—condemned by him through their own actions.

In Chapter 7, Duke draws together insights from throughout the book to relate them to the context in which John was written. He finds that the particular ironic techniques observed indicate a Hellenistic milieu, while the themes and presuppositions of John's irony reflect Jewish concerns. He also explores the relations among irony, metaphor, double meaning, and misunderstanding in John's gospel, concluding that all serve to point readers beyond the surface to hidden depths of meaning. Duke further finds that the study of irony corroborates current hypotheses about the community behind this gospel, in that it implies the existence of a community that shared John's ironic literary mode and the sense of duality and superior knowledge it involves. Johannine irony is used polemically against the synagogue that opposed this community, but more importantly to sustain the community itself and to appeal to Jewish "semi-believers." In this, John's irony itself attracts belief by its offer of an experience both of a community of superior knowledge and of choice in favor of the higher level of meaning that is the truth about Jesus.

Duke's book is well organized and very clearly and engagingly written (far more so than can be indicated in a review). In conception and in ex-

egesis it is carefully balanced, establishing its points while avoiding extreme claims. Though some knowledge of Greek is helpful, many readers will profit from this book, especially students of the gospel of John and of the Bible as literature. The former will be reminded again of the deep bond between form and content in John. Duke's last chapter convincingly portrays irony as a thread linking literary style, communal background, and theology in the Fourth Gospel. In the individual studies at the center of the book Duke is able to point out levels of irony, including comic irony, in familiar passages where they may not have been seen before. The studies in Chapter 6 especially will be illuminiating even to those who have worked through these stories in depth.

Not every one will be able to accept every suggestion of ironic intent that Duke puts forward. Nevertheless, many texts acquire a greater depth and a richer resonance through this book, and we are able to see that in several previously unsuspected cases the Fourth Evangelist may have wanted to share a smile with the reader at those who could not perceive in the flesh of Jesus the Word that was God.

Those who are interested in the literary study of the Bible will find here an excellent example of the application of recent literary theory, concerning the nature of irony in this case, to a specific text. Though no other biblical book is so permeated by irony as John, the definitions, approach, and examples that Duke provides should prove useful in further studies of other writings; indeed, Duke himself points to the irony in a number of Old Testament passages. The discussions of irony in Greek literature are also very helpful, tracing specific ironic patterns that are found also in John. More waits to be done here to explore the diffusion of such patterns in the cultural milieu of the Fourth Gospel.

A full bibliography and indexes of authors and scripture references complete the volume.

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