

## Book Reviews

*The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*. Edited by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. xxviii + 637 pages. \$35.00.  
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*The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (JANT) is a landmark contribution to the understanding of New Testament and Christian origins. Combining qualities of a commentary and a study Bible, this effort by fifty professional Jewish New Testament scholars provides noteworthy insights pertaining to the Jewish character of these Christian texts.

JANT identifies features of first- and second-century Judaism that clarify New Testament premises. The text establishes connections between New Testament writings and Jewish postbiblical and rabbinic texts and contextualizes polemical features of New Testament passages that have fostered nineteen centuries of Christian teachings of contempt for Jews and Judaism. JANT clarifies understandings of Israel that have informed both Judaism and the Jesus movement as they were emerging in competition toward the end of the first century.

JANT informs Christian readers of this Jewish matrix while it familiarizes Jewish readers with texts that best disclose various movements within first-century Israel. Respectful toward both Christian and Jewish believing readers, JANT was deliberately designed to help readers “understand what the New Testament writings meant within their own social, historical and religious context” (Editor’s Preface, xii).

Each New Testament book is preceded by an insightful introduction of a page or two, the exception being Adele Reinhartz’s six-page masterful introduction to the Fourth Gospel. Annotations of each book are far more extensive than those of the average study Bible. While these notes are informed by the premises of contemporary critical scholarship, they concentrate on relevant Jewish concerns. The annotations clarify and enhance an appreciation of how Judaism informed the traditions as well as the redaction of these early Christian writings. While many study Bibles will include references to Old Testament and deuterocanonical writings, JANT adds references to rabbinic texts as well as relevant passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, and Philo, among others.

Maps of geography referenced in the four Gospels, Acts, Galatians, and Revelation are included with these texts as are engaging sidebars, such as the “Death of Jesus” in Acts and “Woman and the Symbolism of Pollution” in Revelation, that clarify Jewish topics or the author’s scholarly interests.

The volume contains thirty brief essays on related topics ranging from “The New Testament between the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) and Rabbinic Literature,” by coeditor Marc Zvi Brettler to “Jewish Responses to Believers in Jesus,” by Claudia Setzer. While many comments found in the introduction and sidebars are familiar to New Testament scholars, fresh challenges are contained in these presentations. For example, Amy-Jill Levine contests the popular Christian contrasts of the Pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18:9-14, offering an alternative that many will find breathtaking. Aaron Gale comments on Matthew’s account of the virginal birth, adding suggestions about the origin of the tradition of virginal conception that go far beyond the typical Christian recognition that Matthew’s Septuagint rendering of Isaiah 7:14, “parthenos” (virgin), is an inaccurate translation of Isaiah’s “alma” (young woman) in the Hebrew Bible. Elsewhere, Shira Lander discusses women’s hair covering in antiquity, incorporating historical detail to call into question a common feminist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11. Among the essays, some topics duplicate one another and others not included would be worthwhile to address, some positions will be questioned, and some entries examine familiar ground.

*The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation* is a valuable compilation recommended for the reference or general collection of U.S. libraries. Those who teach the New Testament will find JANT a valuable textbook, worthy of including in all course bibliographies, while those who preach will want this impressive title in their personal libraries.

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*God’s Beauty: A Call to Justice.* By Patrick T. McCormick. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012. ix + 154 pages. \$19.95 (paper).

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Patrick McCormick’s elegantly written book on beauty and justice is an extended meditation on the biblical visions of Genesis and the care for the stranger so prominent in both testaments. In four rich chapters, McCormick raises questions about the significance of creation, theological