

(as over against merely reactive or defensive-aggressive) politics.

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THE CLASH OF GODS: A REINTERPRETATION OF EARLY CHRISTIAN ART. By Thomas F. Mathews. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993. Pp. x + 223; plates, illustrations. N.p.

Analyzing artistic images and other cultural phenomena Mathews argues against "the Emperor Mystique" made popular through the works of Grabar. Instead of interpreting early Christian art as borrowing images from the political arena, Mathews contends that the images were part of a cultural conflict between the gods. Anyone who is interested not only in the impact of images on the wider culture but also in specific iconographic expressions will delight in the discussions of clashing divine powers expressed in the images of the ass, the healer or magician, the live-giving feminine, and the apocalyptic child and judge. The argument of the book engages the critical mind through its use of well-chosen visual illustrations and other documentary evidence. For the student or scholar who studies early Christianity, Mathews provides a context to understand texts (canonical, orthodox, and heretical), liturgical practices (including processions), theological disputes, and images. For any student or scholar of art and culture he provides insight into their interaction as well as a model for critical analysis. A must read for most scholars.

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THE CHRIST-HAUNTED LANDSCAPE: FAITH AND DOUBT IN SOUTHERN FICTION. By Susan Ketchin. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1994. Pp. xix + 408. \$16.95.

This book introduces and examines contemporary southern writers and the relationship of their fiction to matters of faith, religious issues, and southern religious culture. In the attempt to explore a diversity of writers, visions, and styles, Susan Ketchin focuses on twelve representative southern authors (Lee Smith, Reynolds Price, Larry Brown, Sheila Bosworth, Sandra Hollin Flowers, Will Campbell, Doris Betts, Randall Kenan, Mary Ward Brown, Harry Crews, Clyde Edgerton, and Allan Gurganus). For each writer, Ketchin offers a short but helpful critical commentary, a representative piece of fiction, a descriptive profile of the writer that is often very enlightening, and an interview that focuses on the relationship of the writer's work to religion. Ketchin's book provides a broad view of the subject, not an in-depth study of any particular writer. As such it is an excellent introduction to some of the South's best contemporary authors.

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Ancient Near East

DIVINATION IN ANCIENT ISRAEL AND ITS NEAR EASTERN ENVIRONMENT: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION. By Frederick H. Cryer. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*, 142. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994. Pp. 367. Cloth (ISBN: 1-85075-353-9), \$70.00.

This Aarhus/Bochum dissertation (B. Otzen/S. Herrmann) attempts to provide a socio-anthropological basis for the study of ancient Israelite and Near Eastern divination. Because scholars have generally equated divination with primitive magic and superstition, they have ignored it as a topic for serious study. Cryer's survey of the study of magic points out that scholars have focused entirely on "savage" societies, and that no one has attempted a study of magic in urban, literate societies. His survey of studies of magic and divination in the African Azande society establishes that divination is a means "for producing (notional) knowledge in a society from what are presumed to be extra-human sources" (121-22). His identification of divination as an empirically-based, scientific endeavor then informs his discussion of Near Eastern and Israelite divination. He stresses that divination is practiced by highly trained specialists in literate societies, and that it is prone to borrow foreign elements and to assign them new social significance. Nevertheless, his study of Hebrew terminology employed for divination and associated magical practices demonstrates that none are loan words, and undermines Deuteronomic claims that such practices entered Israel from foreign sources. Knowledge of divination was widespread in Israelite society, and it frequently influences the presentation of biblical literature. This instructive study will benefit biblical scholars, theologians, comparative religionists, and students of all levels.

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AMONG THE HOST OF HEAVEN: THE SYRO-PALESTINIAN PANTHEON AS BUREAUCRACY. By Lowell K. Handy. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994. Pp. xvii + 218; illustrations. Cloth (ISBN: 0-931464-84-6), \$27.50.

Developed from a chapter of his 1987 dissertation (Chicago), Handy's book explores the Syro-Palestinian pantheon, especially as portrayed in the main Ugaritic Baal myths, as a bureaucracy. Two introductory chapters express appropriate caution about the enterprise and the utility of the various sources. (Oddly, the god lists are dismissed, rather than analyzed.) Each

bureaucratic level is then introduced by a summary description of the functioning of its modern counterpart: chief executive, management, specialists, labor. The ancient categories proposed are: authoritative deities (El and Asherah), active deities (e.g., Baal, Anat), artisans (e.g., Kothar), and messengers. A concluding chapter emphasizes the scribes' bureaucratic context as shaping their depiction of divine society. There is no analysis of that context here, only reference to Diakonoff's study of the structure of Near Eastern society before 1500 BCE (*Oikumene* 3 [1982] 7-100). *The work is suggestive and often puts familiar texts or questions in a fresh perspective. It is readable and accessible to a wide audience.*

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DIE INSCRIFTEN VON ZINCIRLI: NEUE EDITION UND VERGLEICHENDE GRAMMATIK DES PHÖNIZISCHEN, SAM'ALISCHEN UND ARAMÄISCHEN TEXTKORPUS. By Josef Tropper. *Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas*, 6. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1993. Pp. xi + 350; plates. Cloth (ISBN: 3-927120-14-6), DM 105.

Zinjirli, in southern Turkey, the site of ancient Sam'al or Yaudi, is a rare site in that it yielded texts in three West Semitic languages. Tropper provides something new in this volume in bringing all the texts together for convenient study and analysis. The excellent plates enhance the book, for too often students study ancient texts as if they were nothing more than words on the printed page. Overall, the work is solid, but there are no novel conclusions. The one Phoenician inscription and the ten Aramaic inscriptions are written in the standard varieties of these languages. The three remaining inscriptions (the longest and most important of which is dedicated to the god Hada, about 735 BCE) are written in the local dialect of ancient Sam'al/Yaudi, called Samalian by scholars. Tropper follows many earlier scholars in identifying Samalian as a branch of Early Aramaic which split off from all other types of Old Aramaic. The texts are clearly presented and the grammatical analysis is very detailed. For those interested in more general matters, Tropper includes overviews of the historical and religious issues emanating from an examination of these inscriptions. Recommended only for libraries with research components in West Semitic.

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TEL KARRANA 3, TELL JIKAN, TELL KHIRBET SALIH. Edited by Gernot Wilhelm and Carlo Zaccagnini. *Baghdader Forschungen*, 15. Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1993. Pp. xiv + 293; plates. Cloth (ISBN: 3-8053-1543-0), DM 180.

It is rare to find a comprehensive final excavation report within a decade of the inception of a project. Such is the case with this magnificently