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Review: 'Who Are the People of God? Early Christian Models of Community'

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of the agenda for the conceivable future. The book should be in every college library and would be a valuable resource for anyone teaching New Testament today.

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SANDRA M. SCHNEIDERS

Who Are the People of God? Early Christian Models of Community. By Howard Clark Kee. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995. vii + 280 pages. \$32.50.

In this work Howard Clark Kee seeks to draw insights from two primary sources: Jacob Neusner's work on formative Judaism and postmodern studies including sociology (particularly the sociology of knowledge), anthropology, and paradigmatic studies. Kee's goal is to "produce a new set of analytical modes and theoretical procedures by which the diverse and dynamic development of postexilic Judaism and the origins of Christianity can be illumined and more responsibly analyzed" (13). He argues that the questions, the theories of historical development, and the categories of analysis into which biblical scholarship from the nineteenth and twentieth century have been classified are artificial, simplistic, and biased in favor of later philosophical prejudices.

The book is divided into nine chapters that include an introduction, seven chapters that understand Judaism and Christianity in terms of different community models, and a short concluding chapter on the gospel tradition. In order to understand Kee's method(s), it is essential for the reader to read the introduction carefully. It is there that Kee discusses both the methodological issues that motivate his study and the questions critical for his historical analysis and reconstruction. These questions include boundary, authority, status and role issues, as well as ritual, literary (genre), social implications, group function, symbolic universe, and the social construction of reality questions.

In chapter 1 Kee examines the literature of postexilic Judaism and identifies five different community models, suggesting that different bodies of literature provide access to community interest and organization. In chapters 2 through 6, he uses those models shared (with important differences) but that these modes were significantly altered as the communities became formalized. These models include: the community of the wise, the law-abiding community, the community where God dwells among his (*sic*) people, the community of mystical participation, and the ethnically and culturally inclusive community.

Kee's study is successful in terms of his goals: (1) his work demonstrates that postmodern analytical categories are applicable to ancient texts; and (2) he has demonstrated Neusner's argument that both the literature and social organization of groups at the turn of the eras and through the first century C.E. are best understood in terms of *Judaisms and Christianities*. Neither tradition is monolithic and both are in formative stages of development.

The book would be more helpful if each chapter contained a cogent summary of issues at the end. The novice reader is likely to become overwhelmed

by the sheer volume of literary sources included in this work. Additionally, one would hope that publishers soon come to realize that footnotes (rather than notes gathered at the end of a book) are much more user-friendly and increase both the value and usefulness of a book.

This book is recommended for those interested in the application of post-modern methodologies to biblical studies, the shared and distinct worlds of Judaism and early Christianity, and those looking for new analytical models for biblical studies; graduate students; the scholar; the college library.

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PAMELA THIMMES

Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads. By Gil Baillie. New York: Crossroad, 1995. xvii + 293 pages. \$24.95.

About once a decade I read a book which profoundly affects the way I see reality. Gil Baillie's *Violence Unveiled* is such a book.

Baillie's thesis is that the Bible, read anthropologically, is not a trove of religious information but an "unveiling" of the fundamental daemonic structures of human consciousness and the resulting satanic cultural dynamics that are destroying the world. These dynamics of violence can only be healed if people become conscious of them and thus they are rendered susceptible to the touch of God. But, says Baillie, "The God depicted in the Bible [who often demands or sanctions violence] is not always synonymous with 'the biblical [i.e., the real] God,' and sometimes the two are profoundly incompatible" (199). "[T]he biblical virus" (163) has for 4,000 years been slowly but steadily subverting the culture-sustaining collusion of violence and religion. This unveiling of violence is bringing humanity to the crossroads between the only two available forms of religious transcendence: genocidal savagery and sanctity.

Baillie builds on René Girard's and Robert Hamerton-Kelly's explorations of sacred violence. According to this theory, the intimate motor of all unredeemed human activity is mimetic desire, which gives rise to the passions of envy, jealousy, anger, rivalry, and so on. These passions generate violence, and violence is contagious. Violence is kept from becoming total war to the death of all against all by the mechanism that Hamerton-Kelly calls the "generative mimetic scapegoating mechanism," i.e., the unification of the violent into a mob which falls in unanimity upon a single designated victim as the carrier of all evil. This paroxysm of violence, perceived as socially necessary, is ritualized as service to God to control its extent and mythologized as God's will to disguise its evil. Thus, human culture is made possible by the control of "bad violence" by "good violence." It is precisely the dynamic we witnessed in the Gulf War and that "justifies" capital punishment.

This mechanism, however, works only as long as its dynamics remain unconscious to the onlooker. All those who participate in an atrocity have to be able to forget or justify the horror in which they have participated. They have to be able to believe that it was, however revolting, "God's mysterious will."



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