to honor their wives as the "weaker vessel," K. understands "weaker" (*asthenesteron*) as "more vulnerable" and "vessel" (*skeuos*) as member of a family. Husbands are to honor their wives as the "more vulnerable member" of the marriage and family within that culture. This translation helpfully moves the interpretation away from any implication that women have intrinsic versus culturally imposed weakness. K. begins this section by noting that understanding ancient social structures can help the reader decide if the instructions here are universals or culturally relative (p. 210). He provides this background information in abundance and leaves readers to make up their own minds.

Keener's discussion of 3:18–22, perhaps the most difficult passage of the letter, is a logical step-by-step evaluation of options that creates an inviting interpretation cognizant of relevant primary sources. He traces the origins of the common interpretation that this passage describes Jesus preaching to the dead while in the tomb prior to the resurrection. In contrast, he affirms that this passage speaks of Jesus being resurrected by the Spirit of God prior to this preaching. It was during his ascension that he proclaimed his victory to the imprisoned fallen angels of Genesis 6, whose cohabitation with humanity brought God's judgment upon the earth in the flood.

Another problem for interpretation here is the reference to eight people being saved in the flood by passing through water in the ark as prefiguring water baptism. Usually baptism is said "to save" by an "appeal to God for a good conscience" (3:21), a translation with its own problems in light of Pauline thought. K. argues that *eperōtēma* should not be translated as "appeal" but rather as "pledge." The one being baptized is pledging to live in such a way as to keep a clear conscience now that there is salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As is characteristic of K.'s work, the commentary is clear, engaging, thorough, and judicious. The commentary is enriched at appropriate places by more than two dozen excursuses or "closer look" sections, which provide background that the reader may not possess. While it is often said of reference works, this commentary truly is useful for students, clergy, and academics alike.

Duane F. Watson, Ashland, Ohio

SUNG UK LIM, *Otherness and Identity in the Gospel of John* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). Pp. xiv + 195. €103.99.

The book is a revision of Sung Uk Lim's doctoral dissertation submitted to Vanderbilt University under the supervision of Fernando Segovia (2015). It aims to recover the suppressed agency and voices of Johannine minor characters (p. 7). In contrast to the often-negative portrayals of minor characters as "inferior, incomprehensive, and powerless" (pp. 5, 73), L. argues that they are complex, dynamic, creative agents who contest and destabilize the pervasive dualistic and exclusivist *Weltanschauung* operative in the Jewish and Roman contexts (pp. 6, 73). The book's first two chapters lay out the research question and discuss the hermeneutics of otherness and recovery. In chap. 1, L. highlights the significance of otherness and identity in biblical interpretation, and chap. 2 is a survey of important works on minor characters in relation to Jesus in modern Johannine scholarship.

The chapter also discusses an alternative interpretive strategy that combines approaches of narrative criticism and "deconstructive postcolonialism" in order to offer nuanced readings of the minor characters in John's Gospel and to underscore the significance of their complexity and ambiguity.

In chaps. 3 to 6, L. seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct the otherness and identity of some Johannine minor characters. In chap. 3, L. employs Judith Butler's theory of performativity to demonstrate that Nicodemus is not a marginalized, victimized character but rather an ambiguous, subversive one (3:1–15; 7:45–52; 19:38–42). Nicodemus performs his own ambiguous identity by crossing the borderlines between the Jewish and Johannine communities and subversively making Jesus an (anti-)imperial figure with an elaborate Jewish burial procedure comparable to a royal one. In chap. 4, L. turns attention to the otherness of the Samaritan woman (4:1–42) from within the Johannine community. L. utilizes Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry to highlight how the Samaritan woman mimics the *imperium* of Rome, for example, traveling as conquering to challenge and destabilize Jewish and Roman hierarchical power structures. In chap. 5, L. uses Giorgio Agamben's theory of biopolitics to underline the shifting power dynamics between the colonizer (Pilate) and the colonized (the Jews and Jesus) in the trial narrative (18:28–19:16a). Pilate, a formidable colonizer, is threatened by the colonized. The Jews, the colonized subjects, are powerful in dealing with Jesus but are powerless in their dealings with Pilate. Jesus is simultaneously an outsider and an insider of the earthly world. He is subjected to—and is excluded from—the Jewish and Roman worlds. He, in turn, declares that his kingdom is not of this world and that some are excluded from his heavenly sovereignty. Chapter 6 engages with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of double-voicedness to analyze the otherness of the mother of Jesus (a Galilean Jewish woman) and the Beloved Disciple (a Judean Jewish man) in the crucifixion scene (19:25–27, 34). They represent different theological and ideological groups within the Johannine community. Jesus's instruction to Mary and the Beloved Disciple "to adopt each other as mother and son" (p. 161) is meant to persuade different groups to maintain oneness in solidarity as members of the messianic community. Chapter 7 concludes with the implications of otherness in biblical interpretation.

The book is a welcome contribution to the ongoing discussions on character and characterization in Johannine scholarship. The cohesive and critical textual and contextual analyses of the minor characters and Jesus, from a deconstructive, postcolonial perspective, bring to the fore the polyvalent readings of otherness and the many dimensions of Johannine minor characters (i.e., their complexity, ambiguity, and malleability) that have been customarily overlooked or regarded as afterthoughts. L. demonstrates systematically and convincingly how the otherness of the minor characters and their responses to Jesus destabilize and subvert John's dualistic categories.

This book will appeal to and benefit readers interested in studies of character and characterization and postcolonial biblical readings of John's Gospel. The "cutting edge" and liberating postcolonial interpretive framework is a model for critical analysis of other minor characters in the Gospel of John and the Bible in general. L. is to be commended for this study, which aims to reclaim the suppressed voices of marginalized people in terms of gender, ethnicity, and religion. In doing so, he challenges the interpreting communities to "interpret biblical texts from the margins" so that the "other" in both the biblical world and our world will not remain on the periphery but rather be part of the center (p. 166). Readers

will appreciate L.'s articulation of and advocacy for an interpretative approach that can lead to respect, tolerance, and inclusion of difference in our increasingly globalized yet fragmented world.

Vien V. Nguyen, SCJ, Hales Corners, Wisconsin

PATRICK MCMURRAY, *Sacrifice, Brotherhood, and the Body: Abraham and the Nations in Romans* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021). Pp. x + 269. $110.

Patrick McMurray's published dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 2020; supervised by Matthew Novenson) offers a broad-ranging, Paul-within-Judaism reading of Romans from the point of view of sacrifice as a means of constructing family membership (with Daniel Ulluci and Nancy Jay). The addressees' cultic "sacrifice" (*thysia*) in 12:1–2 is instrumental in ratifying, accepting, and even *constructing* family membership and brotherhood, thus fulfilling the promise to Abraham in Rom 4:17 of the "nations" (*plural*) as heirs.

The Roman gentiles' *latreia* in 12:1 (cf. Jewish *latreia* in 9:4–5) corresponds to their prior, idolatrous *latreia* in 1:26–32, which led to immoral, impure behaviors, passions, and desires. With circumcised hearts, the gentiles are now fulfilling the law by transformed lives. With a nod to Richard B. Hays's methodology, McM. stresses the *lack* of Levitical or sacrificial language with the *hilastērion* in Rom 3:25. The mention of Jesus's blood is capable of other interpretations. The same problem afflicts supposed allusions to the "sin offering" in Rom 8:3: the context refers to cosmic *conflict*. Several NT instances of *peri hamartias* have nothing to do with the Levitical sin offering. More likely, *anochē* in Rom 3:26 means "truce," its most common meaning in Greek literature, in which case the *hilastērion* is a peace-making *gift* (note the gift language in this context!). Christ was "handed over" (4:25) as a *ransom* (*lytron*) to free prisoners from slavery, to reconcile them to God, and to bring about peace (cf. 5:1). With familiar language for the gentile addressees, the ransom from the slavery to sin permits adoption into Abraham's family (Romans 4).

McMurray stresses how the distinction between Jews/Israelites and gentiles is never eliminated (chap. 4). Christ remains the seed/heir of *Abraham*, and the gentiles are adopted into that heritage, thus fulfilling the promise to Abraham of *many* tribes and families. God is a God of (ethnic) *promise*, not of covenant (p. 104), contrary to N. T. Wright, who obliterates the distinction between gentiles and Jews in a *new* "Israel" (a dialogue partner in chap. 4). How would that "brutal redefinition" demonstrate God's "faithfulness" to Israel (3:3; p. 114)? Why would Israel's Messiah bring about an abolishment or cessation of Jewish identity? (p. 115).

McMurray tackles controversial matters in scholarship on Romans, e.g., "law" is always Mosaic law; "doing" the law is synonymous with "fulfilling" it (e.g., p. 200); the "Jew" of Rom 2:17 is a gentile. McM. does not often engage those representing other sides in these debates, e.g., Michael Winger's multiple meanings of *nomos* (*By What Law? The Meaning of* nomos *in the Letters of Paul* [SBLDS 128; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992]) and Stephen Westerholm's distinction between "doing" and "fulfilling" the law (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004]). McM.'s case could have been sharpened by engagement with the extensive body of

work of Daniel Bailey and Stephen Hultgren. McM. cites Bailey's summary in *TynBul* 51 (2000) 155–58, but not the widely cited dissertation itself ("Jesus as the Mercy Seat: The Semantics and Theology of Paul's Use of Hilasterion in Romans 3:25" [Diss., University of Cambridge, 1999]) or his many later works. Bailey contends that Paul's usage reflects a distinctively *Jewish* usage rather than the Greco-Roman ransoming gift that McM. requires. Bailey classifies the Trojan Horse *hilastērion* as a votive offering. McM. also does not cite a good deal of literature *in support* of his readings (e.g., the prior work on Rom 8:3 of Cilliers Breytenbach, Andrew Thornton, and A. Andrew Das). McM. should grapple with scholars who see sin as a primarily human activity in Romans 1–4 as opposed to the power of Romans 5–8, Rom 3:9 notwithstanding—especially since he *needs* sin to be a power in Romans 3 (Christ's *hilastērion* as a truce in the war against sin, e.g., p. 78).

McMurray appears to strain the limits of 12:1. He seizes on *adelphos* in the context of *thysia* to conclude that Paul is urging the Romans to *ratify* their brotherhood in Christ by means of their sacrifice. He concedes that "the discourse immediately surrounding the sacrifice of 12:1 is in a sense limited" (p. 156), without reference to an accompanying prayer, as would be expected. McM. believes that brotherhood is stressed here, but Paul has *assumed* the Roman *adelphoi* throughout (e.g., 8:12, 29[!]; 10:1). Why should this instance be especially significant? Rather than offering sacrifice to "*construct*" family membership/brotherhood, Paul's "therefore" indicates that the sacrifice is a *response* to sonship and brotherhood already argued (Romans 8). Did not the *sonship* in Romans 8 necessitate the affirmation of Israel as the initially adopted sons in 9:4–5? McM. would prefer Paul to have stressed brotherhood over sonship in Romans 8 (pp. 160–61). Sacrifice may ratify family membership, but it is a point Paul does not stress. He usually at these points in his letters exhorts his hearers based on what he has already argued. Mention of a ratifying sacrifice would function better for McM. had it been in Romans 8. Nevertheless, McM. offers a creative, challenging, coherent reading of Romans.

A. Andrew Das, Elmhurst, Illinois

DOUGLAS J. MOO, *The Letter of James* (2nd ed.; Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021). Pp. xxxvi + 347. $45.

This second edition of a book first published in 2000 has undergone substantial revision and expansion. It reflects the growth in scholarly concentration on the General Epistles since I published the first edition of *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* in 1997 (Studies on Personalities of the New Testament; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press). Much has happened since then, including my commentary on *James* in 2012 (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic). One of my conclusions was that James "the brother of the Lord" was the outstanding leader in the Jerusalem church until 62, when he was assassinated and leadership passed to Symeon, the cousin of Jesus and James. Jerusalem, the first and leading church, continued its leadership role until the Roman suppression of the second Jewish revolt in 135. At that time, the Jews were expelled from Judea and Jerusalem became a gentile city with a gentile church. Any significant Jewish influence on the development of the early Christian movement ceased. Jews and Christians became