

should do a great deal to accomplish the worthy and far overdue goal of making certain that these NT voices are heard. I commend it highly.

William R. Baker

Hope International University, Fullerton, CA

The Significance of Exemplars for the Interpretation of the Letter of James. By Robert J. Foster. *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2/376. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014, x + 233 pp., €74.00 paper.

This revised Ph.D. dissertation, initially written for the University of Birmingham, endeavors “to analyze the Letter of James on its own terms” (p. v). Foster recognizes that he, like any other interpreter, is influenced by his faith perspective, and he declares up front his adherence to the English evangelical tradition. However, he also makes it perfectly clear that he “does not assume” that James “adheres to the kerygma of the Book of Acts and/or ‘gospel’ of the apostle Paul,” that he “has no desire to try and prove” that James “was in agreement with Paul” concerning the relationship of faith and works, and finally that he has “not consciously tried to impose” his confessional opinions “on the text” (pp. v–vi). Essentially Foster answers this question: what was the function of the four named exemplars (Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah) from Jewish history and tradition in the Letter of James, namely their implications for binding together the letter, their links that may throw light on the purpose of the letter, and their significance for interpreting the letter (p. 5)?

The book is divided into eight chapters; the first two tackle introductory issues. Whereas chapter 1 confronts the historical tragedy of interpreting James through Pauline lenses (pp. 1–7), chapter 2 concentrates on genre, structure, date, and authorship (pp. 8–24). In the former chapter, Foster admits that “the pervasive influence of Pauline theology can make it difficult for scholars to take an objective step backwards when seeking to interpret the Letter of James” (p. 3). In the latter chapter, Foster describes the genre of the book as an “encyclical” (p. 14). While selectively citing some of the problems surrounding date and authorship, in the end Foster assumes the authorial claims of the letter and thereby accepts a 40–62 CE dating of the letter, since it was written sometime during the lifetime of James, the leader of the Jerusalem church (p. 24). Yet Foster leaves at least this reader scratching his head when he later concludes that “an audience comprising one or more groups in Syria-Palestine shortly before the Jewish revolt of 66–74 C.E. seems as good an option as any” (p. 203).

Chapter 3, “James 1 as an Introduction to the Book’s Themes” (pp. 25–58), provides a list (p. 27) and then a brief discussion of eight themes in James that frame the book: the purpose of trials (vv. 2–4; pp. 30–34), the need for wisdom and trust in God (vv. 5–8; pp. 34–36), the great reversal of the poor and the wealthy (vv. 9–11; pp. 36–38), trials and the true source of temptation (vv. 12–16; pp. 38–40), the generous life-giving God (vv. 17–18; pp. 40–42), the response to the gift of the *λόγος ἀληθείας* (vv. 19–21; pp. 42–44), doers and hearers of the word contrasted

(vv. 22–25; pp. 44–45), and finally empty and true religion contrasted (vv. 26–27; pp. 45–48). Similar to most scholars, Foster believes the structure of James 1 introduces the book's composition and James 2–5 functions as the main body of the book (p. 6–7). Thus while observing the author's introduction to the themes of testing and faith whereby the overcoming of such testing moves believers toward maturity, Foster admits that James has “no single overarching theme in mind” (pp. 48, 200). Nevertheless, Foster will eventually argue that the author comes close to a predominant theme by way of five catchwords (*πειρασμός*, *πίστις*, *ἔργον*, *ὑπομονή*, and *τέλειος*) that appear throughout the letter and how they interact. More specifically he demonstrates how “Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah are all fine examples of how these five catchwords can come together” to provide for an all-encompassing theme for the letter (p. 200).

Foster, however, does not limit chapter 3 to the letter's potential for a principle theme. He also directs attention to (1) the eschatological lenses through which James interacts with themes (pp. 49–51); (2) the noticeable link with Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, which is nicely enhanced with a chart (pp. 51–55); and (3) the word (*λόγος*) and the law (*νόμος*) whereby he concludes the *νόμος* is “the new Torah which Jesus taught, quite possibly reinterpreted by the Author for his own messianic audience” (pp. 55–57). Ultimately the eight themes in the first chapter of James underpins “the messianic community's praxis in daily life such that its members must seek to live peaceably with each other, control both speech and internal cravings, and demonstrate the reality of their new status as a ‘kind of first fruits’ of God's word of truth as they actively minister to the needs of the vulnerable, whilst at the same time eschewing the values of the world” (p. 58).

The heart of the book, however, is found in chapters 4 through 7 where Foster directs attention to each exemplar and James's use of his five catchwords: chapter 4, “Abraham” (pp. 59–103); chapter 5, “Rahab” (pp. 104–27); chapter 6, “Job” (pp. 128–64); and chapter 7, “Elijah” (pp. 165–92). To do so, Foster engages not only Hebrew Scriptures for each exemplar (Abraham: pp. 60–62; Rahab: pp. 104–7; Job: pp. 129–34; Elijah: pp. 166–71), but he also interacts with what non-canonical works (Abraham: pp. 62–75; Rahab: pp. 108–10; Job: pp. 134–36; Elijah: pp. 171–74) as well as the canonical writings of the NT (Abraham: pp. 75–80; Rahab: pp. 111–13; Elijah: pp. 174–75) say about each exemplar before evaluating their significant appearance in James (Abraham: pp. 80–103; Rahab: pp. 113–27; Job: pp. 136–64; Elijah: pp. 175–91). Admittedly, there are times non-canonical retellings are sparse, as in the case of Rahab. Foster relegates his searches to a few rabbinic sources (*b. Meg.* 14b–15a; *b. Zeb.* 116b) with a brief reference to Josephus (*Ant.* 5.1.2) and *1 Clem.* 12:3, and he makes several appeals to Cohen's article on Rahab in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Nevertheless, Foster traces every exemplar in canonical and non-canonical Jewish works before examining them in the Letter of James.

Foster's concluding chapter, “Four Exemplars—A Unity of Purpose?” (pp. 192–204), restates the threefold common thread that links Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah together in James. First, they have a whole-hearted commitment to God (pp. 193–95). Second, they are presented as outsiders (pp. 195–96). Finally, they face their tests of faith alone (pp. 196–97). Ultimately, “all four exemplars over-

came their faith tests, showed their wisdom and single-minded commitment to God, cared for those in need, spoke God's word or the right words about God and proved themselves to be true doers of the implanted word" (p. 197) and thereby proved themselves to be friends of God (p. 204).

The exceptional contribution Foster makes to the study of James is his demonstration of how non-canonical Jewish texts assist in understanding James's use of exemplars in his developing argument. While similar to Kurt Anders Richardson's "Job as Exemplar in the Epistle of James" in *Hearing the OT in the NT* ([Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], pp. 213–29), Foster's work has improved Richardson's discussion due the interaction with non-canonical material. For instance, concerning the presentation of Job in Hebrew Scripture, Foster underscores how "the Hebrew Bible depicts Job as a paragon of righteousness both within the Book of Job and in the prophecy of Ezekiel" but not as a paragon of patience (p. 134). In the same way, 11Q^tJ^ob and rabbinic traditions draw similar conclusions. Only in *Testament of Job* 2:1–4:8 and possibly Sirach is Job's patience celebrated. While Foster makes no claims as to the author's awareness of these traditions (p. 135), "patience" (or what he argues should be called "steadfast endurance") is what James underscores with rather exceedingly revealing significance in Jas 5:7–11.

Another example is Abraham. Unlike most non-canonical Jewish literature, the NT (excluding James at this point) argues for a new understanding of Abraham, namely "redefining the scope of those who would inherit the patriarch's posterity" (pp. 75–80). Yet James "has essentially followed Jewish tradition in his use of Abraham as an exemplar," and he views "the patriarch's faithworks earning merit in the accounting books of heaven" (as in *Jub.* 19:8–9; 30:21). Therefore, while "the patriarch is declared righteous by God, such declaration of righteousness is based on his whole-hearted faithful commitment to God as proved by his faithworks rather than on some form of forensic justification" (p. 101). In fact, Foster considers it possible that James "address[es] some misguided form of Paulinism" (p. 100).

Thus the praiseworthy point of Foster's book is the procedure he takes in evaluating each exemplar throughout James. He first reveals the depth of Jewish understanding for each of these exemplars; second, he highlights the different ways various authors of Jewish literature (canonical and non-canonical works) framed the events surrounding each exemplar; and then and only then he directs attention to how James structured his discussion in a way that exposes the theological contributions each exemplar makes to his letter. Foster offers compelling arguments for both how and why the author of James retells the stories for each exemplar, based upon James's historical situation, to address the needs of James's messianic community and to underscore five catchwords that provide a possible faithworks theme for the letter. Foster's work is an excellent read that offers a compelling reason for why the letter of James and the author's appeals to Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah should be read on James's terms and in isolation from Paul.

Herbert W. Bateman IV
Cyber-Center for Biblical Studies, Leesburg, IN