

Lives. Smith's Jesus, who overcame temptation and triumphed over his enemies, was a paragon of the sturdy virtue which was at the heart of the ideal of British masculinity. Having established the connections between nation-building and the historical Jesus, Moxnes concludes by suggesting that it is now time to move beyond them. An increasingly transnational world, he suggests, requires a more inclusive and global Jesus.

Experts in particular fields may not be satisfied with all aspects of Moxnes' arguments. The notion of a "hegemonic masculinity", he suggests, was fundamental to both the nation-building project and the construction of the lives of Jesus. Historians of masculinity, however, will find his presentation of this theme cursory at best. Similarly, on race, Moxnes presents a potentially intriguing argument about the manner in which Renan used his life of Jesus to elaborate a non-racial model of nationhood. Again, however, the brevity of the discussion here is frustrating. As a historian of French anticlericalism, I personally wished that Moxnes had dedicated more time to elaborating the connections between Renan's vision of Jesus and his personal commitment to the anticlerical movement. For Renan, the historical approach to Jesus was designed in part to contest the dogmatic authority of the Catholic Church, an institution which he considered as an obstacle to the development of French nationalism. These criticisms aside, this is a perceptive and valuable account of a series of fascinating texts whose cultural and political impact is often under-appreciated.

TIM VERHOEVEN
Monash University

JONATHAN BURNSIDE: *God, Justice and Society: Aspects of Law and Legality in the Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011; pp. xl + 542.

Jonathan Burnside is a Reader in Biblical Law at the University of Bristol. In this book he lays out an account of biblical law in light of modern legal concepts and legal assumptions. The final result is an insightful investigation of biblical law as applied to specific areas of modern society such as crime, divorce, marriage, property, social welfare, and even the environment.

The depth and coverage of the book are breathtaking. We are dealing here with a massive work of no less than 542 pages plus introduction. Burnside spends its initial chapters setting out the theoretical propositions on which biblical law rests. Here the author reveals how the specific issues of law and religion are inextricably linked, and that biblical law is actually a fundamental aspect of our Western culture and legal traditions.

Although not always recognised as such in our current Western context, the author is correct to argue that a great deal of modern law is an indirect engagement with biblical law. Characterised in terms of "an integration of different instruction genres of the Bible which together express a vision of society ultimately answerable to God" (p. xxxii), biblical law is perceived by Burnside not as a "codified law" but integrated "into the wider story of God's purposes for Israel and, beyond that, for the world" (p. 14).

In this sense, biblical law is defined as "based on a dynamic interactive relationship between law and social process, as a result of which law is reinterpreted and transformed" (p. 24). Above all, biblical law is presented by Burnside as something that enables us to love God and to love our neighbour. The proper knowledge of biblical law

would therefore assist us “develop a worldview that is shaped at every point by an understanding of what it means to live a life of love as persons made in the image of God and which, in turn, feeds into our understanding and aspirations regarding the sort of world we want to live in” (p. 29).

I have an appreciation for natural law philosophy and so I was particularly interested in the author’s analysis of what has become known as “natural law.” Burnside contends that “the study of natural law addresses one of the mysteries of human consciousness, namely the origin of our sense of [moral] obligation” (p. 67). From this perspective, natural law is said by him to represent “a cosmological relationship between the moral and physical orders of creation” (p. 73). Burnside thinks that such law is natural particularly because unethical behaviour does not fit our human existence as creatures made in the image of God.

The book identifies as the cornerstone of biblical adjudication the belief that God is the sole source of justice. It contends that there is a strong “relationship between the way in which God establishes order in the universe and is concerned for justice in society” (p. 104). The biblical concept of justice, as such, would involve overthrowing oppression and liberating the oppressed. Burnside provides the seminal example of the Exodus story as “the ultimate act of divine justice in the Hebrew Bible. It is an act of God that overthrows the totalitarian rule of Pharaoh and that liberates [people] from slavery” (p. 106).

In view of the book’s undeniable quality I find its approach to environmental issues disappointing. After explaining that God has created the world and that we are only his stewards in this planet, so that to “rape” the environment is a sin, Burnside goes to say that there are no solutions for the problem of climate change “apart from religious narrative” (p. 150). He approvingly quotes the claim by an environmentalist that climate change is “principally moral and theological rather than technological” (p.150). I am not convinced that the debate about climate change should be conducted on a theological rather than scientific basis. Quite the contrary.

But even if Burnside may have misapplied biblical principles, or at least controversially applied them in a few instances, *God, Justice and Society* remains as an ambitious endeavour that undoubtedly has succeeded. This book is destined to become a true classic on the subject. I strongly recommend it to anyone who is seriously interested in the study of biblical law and its relevance for our modern society.

AUGUSTO ZIMMERMANN
Murdoch University

JOHN STREHLOW: *The Tale of Frieda Keysser; Frieda Keysser and Carl Strehlow: An Historical Biography, Volume I: 1875–1910*. London: Wild Cat Press, 2011; pp. xxxii + 1198.

The Tale of Frieda Keysser is a biographical account of the life of Frieda Keysser, the wife of Lutheran missionary Carl Strehlow, written by her grandson, John Strehlow. Delving into the history of her family and ancestors, this biography comes as the result of many years of dedicated archival research, undertaken by the author in both Europe and Australia. While this first volume is an impressive tome of more than one thousand pages, a second volume, covering events from 1910 onward, is currently in production.