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SYLVIA PELLEGRINI, *L'ultimo segno: Il messaggio della vita nel racconto della risurrezione di Lazzaro* (Scienze religiose n.s. 20; Bologna: Dehoniane, 2009). Pp. 273. Paper €18.60.

Sylvia Pellegrini is instructor in New Testament Biblical Theology and Exegesis at the University of Vechta in Lower Saxony, Germany. This book is the result of years of study and reflection on John 11:1-44. There is an excellent bibliography but, unfortunately, no indexes. Neither are there running heads at the top of pages; this amenity would have been of considerable help in working through P.'s prose, clear though it be.

The book is structured as follows: chap. 1: "Status quaestionis"; chap. 2: "A Semiotic Reading of the Text"; chap. 3: "A Holistic Re-reading: 'I Am the Resurrection and the Life'. The Message of Life in the Sign of the Resurrection"; chap. 4: "Hope in the Resurrection at the Time of Jesus"; chap. 5: "The Problem of Historicity"; and "Conclusion."

According to P., the message of John 11:1-44 is that Jesus is a source of everlasting life, that this life is a life without fear and without limitation, that it is not hindered by death, that it exists in complete communion with the Father from which everything comes, and that in order to live this life it is enough to be united to Jesus through faith in him (p. 245).

A number of things stand out from a careful reading of P.'s presentation. For example, she has an impressive command of the secondary literature, especially in German (see pp. 13-54). Further, she has a dim view of trying to separate the "literary layers" of the composition of a text: the "hypotheses keep multiplying without end, thus showing the subjectivity of the criteria" (p. 41). Further still, she offers the wise pronouncement that historicity and symbolism do not necessarily contradict each other (p. 236). Finally, she carefully draws the distinction between the "empirical reader" and the reader envisioned by the text (p. 121).

But two things need to be noted in the limited space of a review. The first is P.'s apparent ignorance of the possibility that the Greek word *Ioudaioi* can mean "Judeans" in John 11 (see as background the carefully argued presentation of Malcolm F. Lowe, "Who Were the IOUDAIOS?" *NovT* 18 [1976] 101-30, esp. 121).

The second is P.'s view of the historicity of the passage (pp. 235-43): "From an examination conducted on the sources and on the text one must with conviction conclude that it

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is a duty to maintain that it is absolutely improbable that the facts which are the subject matter of the account took place exactly as narrated in John, and that it is hardly probable that a man named Lazarus came for a time back to life after being four days dead in the tomb" (p. 242). That the facts occurred exactly as narrated is not a necessary part of the account's being substantially historical—few will deny that the final author/editor of John presented the account from his point of view. This, however, is hardly a reason to condemn the passage as not substantially historical. But to say that it is hardly probable that a man named Lazarus came back to life after four days of being dead in the tomb amounts to an a priori denial of the possibility of the miracle. P. amasses a considerable number of criteria for judging the historicity of an event (pp. 238-40). Now the validity of these criteria as a whole depends on the convergence of probabilities, but a convergence of probabilities is precisely what a miracle is supposed to surmount. Just as no odds can definitively prove statistically the nonexistence of something, so no odds can definitively prove the nonexistence of a miracle. But P.'s well-reasoned view is a reminder that John 11 was written not for people knowing through probabilities but for people knowing through faith, as P. herself maintains (pp. 42, 132, 136).

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