

Takeaways from The Rhetoric of the Gospel (C. Clifton Black)

- An article from <http://www.giffmex.org/ideas/takeaways-2017-2018/>. Takeaways are neither book reviews nor exhaustive summaries. They are merely summaries of insights I found helpful in the books, organized by topic.
- **New Testament**
 - **Matthew literary features (characterization and plot)**
 - Black says that **God and the devil** are flat characters (they do not change or develop within the narrative), and that they serve to frame the narrative. That is, **Matthew's plot** is one of conflict between God and Satan, and this conflict is seen in their respective agents, Jesus and the religious leaders. - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 35-36.
 - In contrast to J. D. Kingsbury's classic work on characterization in Matthew, Black says **that Jesus and the religious leaders**, despite being main characters, are also flat characters, because they do not change. The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders provide the driving force behind the narrative of Matthew's Gospel. - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 35-36.
 - **The disciples and crowds** primarily serve to react to Jesus and the religious leaders. Black also has interesting sections describing the religious leaders (38-39) and the disciples - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 42-43.
 - **Mark exegesis, John exegesis**
 - Black applies rhetorical criticism to **Mark 13** (chapter 3), **John 4** (pages 12-17), and **John 14-17** (80-88). These are long sections with many interesting insights. - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001)
 - **Luke exegesis; Parables**
 - Many people find Jesus' praise of **the unjust steward in Luke 16.1-8** disconcerting. But Black reminds us that Jesus has a number of **surprising people in his parables**, like Samaritans, prodigal sons, and vineyard owners who pay people the same wage no matter how many hours they work. - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 139-140.
 - **Acts exegesis; Acts themes and theology (Jews and Gentiles)**
 - Black argues that **John Mark abandoned the first missionary journey** because he objected to offering the gospel to Gentiles, not because he was lazy or spoiled, as is usually argued in commentaries and sermons.
 - The only explanation given for Mark's defection given in Acts is Paul's objection that Mark did not participate in 'the work'. (15.38)
 - The attempt to reintegrate John Mark comes immediately after the Jerusalem council's decision to open the gospel up to Gentiles.
 - John Mark is mentioned several times in Acts. It makes sense that his inclusion in the book is to further one of the book's central themes. - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 103-108.
 - Black notes the irony of Acts 15: the church could resolve the split over circumcision, but Paul and Barnabas could not resolve the split over Mark. - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 110.

- **Interpretation**

- **Narrative criticism; Rhetorical criticism**

- **Characterization** should be interpreted as a rhetorical (persuasive) device, because examples often inspire us to follow or to reject their examples - C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 23-24.