JETS 65.2 (2022): 349–98

BOOK REVIEWS

Genesis. By John Goldingay. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, xix + 808 pp., $59.99.

John Goldingay, senior professor of OT at Fuller Theological Seminary, is an exceedingly prolific author, having completed a three-volume OT theology, a 17-volume popular series on the OT books (*Genesis for Everyone*, etc.), a complete translation of the OT (entitled *The First Testament: A New Translation*), and more scholarly commentaries on the Psalms (3 vols.), Isaiah 40–55 (2 vols.), Isaiah 56–66, Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Daniel. The volume in question, *Genesis*, is the first published volume in the series Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch.

After an eleven-page introduction, Goldingay discusses the text of Genesis in fifty sections, with each section covering anywhere from seven verses (chapter 24 covers 25:12–18) to nearly three chapters in length (chapter 6 covers 6:9–8:22). For each section, Goldingay provides a brief overview; a translation, with copious footnotes addressing individual Hebrew words; an interpretation section; and often, an "Implications" section that presents intriguing theological inferences of the passage.

Goldingay explains his approach to the commentary section, and I found this fascinating. First, he wrote a rough draft based only on his own thinking and various Hebrew reference works, but without referring to other secondary literature. Then, he consulted a selection of works on Genesis from early Jewish and Christian interpreters, medieval Jewish interpreters, Reformation interpreters, and 19th–21st century interpreters. He then modified his original draft accordingly, adding quotes or simply incorporating the essence of what a source has said (with the source identified in a footnote). He also adds comments from his wife (indicated by her initials) in various places; I counted 36 such comments, most only a sentence or two, though an entire paragraph on Genesis 5. The result is that the text itself reads quite well, since it is virtually never interrupted by the name of a source or by any substantive discussion of that source. The source's name and any interaction with it is left for the footnote (occasionally Goldingay mentions "scholars" but does not provide an identifying footnote; see, e.g., page 8). While this practice aids in readability, it robs the reader of any substantive interaction between Goldingay and his sources. He simply includes as part of his text what his source has said, and only rarely (in a footnote) mentions any contrary opinion. Goldingay's most referenced sources (more than forty times each) were the following: Westermann, Luther, Sarna, Hamilton, Gunkel, von Rad, Fretheim, Seebass, Wenham, Calvin, Brueggemann, Rashi, Skinner, Chrysostom, Barth, and Ibn Ezra—quite a wide range indeed!

If I had one word to summarize my evaluation of this commentary, it would be "idiosyncratic." This description applies not only to the amount of space Goldingay devotes to a passage (sometimes a great deal, sometimes almost nothing), but also to his translation and especially to his interpretation. Since his translation is

largely the same as in his *The First Testament* (mentioned above), which has been reviewed extensively elsewhere, I will mention only a few oddities here from the first few chapters. In Genesis 1, Goldingay refuses to translate *yəhī* (the 3ms jussive usually translated, "Let there be") eleven times, usually simply leaving out the verb idea entirely (as in 1:6: "God said, 'A dome in the middle of the water'"; see also 1:3, 9, 11, 14, 20, 22, and 24); yet he inexplicably decides to keep the cohortative in verse 26: "Let us make humanity." In 2:1, Goldingay translates *ṣəḇā'ōt* as "army" ("So the heavens were finished, and the earth, and all their army"), which seems far too specific and misleading for the Hebrew term used, which can refer to angels, stars, or all creation. At the end of 2:5, Goldingay's translation reads, "There was no human being to serve the ground," translating *'āḇaḏ* as "serve" instead of the more common "work" or "till," which it surely means in this context. Indeed, we find later in the commentary that this translation fits Goldingay's theological purpose: "Genesis makes clear that humanity is not the center of creation. The world was not created for humanity; if anything, humanity was created for the world. … Humanity's relationship to the ground is one of service—service of God and service of the ground, for whose sake humanity was created" (pp. 48, 56). Really? I think Goldingay has it backwards here (see Ps 8). In 2:24–25, Goldingay uses "his woman" instead of "his wife," which he repeats for Cain's wife and Lamech's wives. However, in 6:18 (and the remainder of the occurrences in Genesis), for Noah, his sons, and their descendants, Goldingay switches to "his wife." Why? And Noah's ark in Genesis 6–9 is translated as "chest," leading to the strange translation in 9:18: "Noah's sons who came out of the chest." These are simply a few of the idiosyncratic translations found in Goldingay's work.

In the interpretation sections, Goldingay's vibrant writing style (plus absence of substantive discussion of alternate views) makes reading his work a joy. There are numerous wonderful summative nuggets along the way. For example, concerning the degeneration of man in Genesis 3–4, he writes, "The point is that things are getting worse and worse in Genesis. In Genesis 3 there is disobedience. In 4:1–16 there is murder. In 4:17–24 there is the threat of murder upon murder" (p. 103). But the simplistic style is also problematic, since Goldingay rarely gives much evidence for his assertions, which he states as established fact, without any contrary way of viewing the text. A few examples will suffice. Goldingay states, "Human characters are not as central to the stories in Genesis as they are to modern stories" (p. 7). But no evidence is given to support this dubious claim. Goldingay later asserts that "the snake turns out to be more powerful than God," since Eve listened to the snake, not God (p. 75). But that hardly makes the snake more powerful. In discussing Noah in 6:8, Goldingay says, "The basis for his being exempt from drowning, along with his family and the representatives of the rest of creation, is not his deserving it but God's purpose. He is just lucky" (p. 128). Really? What about the following verse (v. 9), which says, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God"? In his discussion of 19:1–5, Goldingay thinks the demand of Sodom's men "might imply homosexual rape," but he also thinks that it might "just as likely imply that it will be women who will have sex with them." How could that be, when they specifically ask for the two men who

came to visit? In any case, according to Goldingay, the threatened rape "is a response to fear. The whole town is afraid of these strangers." No proof is given for these assumptions, which minimize or eliminate the homosexual element entirely. Goldingay's engaging style sometimes borders on disrespect, as when he comments on 2:2: "A surprise feature to keep people watching through the credits is God's stopping work for day seven" (p. 15), or when he later states, "The account in 6:1–4 works in a jerky fashion" (p. 116).

Despite many excellent insights and fresh approaches to the text, underneath it all Goldingay holds the same basic views of critical scholars who deny the inerrancy of the text. This should not come as a complete surprise, since in the preface to the series, editor Bill Arnold explains that these books of the OT "are divinely inspired, and somehow they say what God intended for them to say. … In general, Christians turn to these writings as trustworthy and authoritative expressions of God's will." While some will be comfortable with this statement and with Goldingay's critical views, many ETS members will understandably find them lacking. In his introduction, Goldingay discusses the typical form-critical elements (saga, legend, myth, etc.). He views Genesis as being like a TV movie, which may be fictional but based loosely on a historical event, and so some things may be factual, and some may be "imaginative," and Goldingay does not seem to care which (pp. 4–5). Yet the NT writers all treat the accounts in Genesis as historical, which should be determinative (see my discussion of this point in "Contemporary Hermeneutical Approaches to Genesis 1–11," in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, ed. Terry Mortenson and Thane Ury [Green Forest, AR: Master, 2008], 146–49). Further, despite his admirable claim in the introduction that no scholarly consensus exists on the sources used in Genesis, Goldingay views the final form of Genesis as no earlier than the Persian period (pp. 8–9), and in the interpretation section itself, it becomes clear that he holds to the Documentary Hypothesis, with its theoretical (and often contradictory) sources J, E, D, and P. The author accordingly holds to doublets within the text: two sometimes contradictory accounts of (1) creation, (2) events from Adam to Lamech, (3) the flood, (4) God's covenant with Abraham, (5) Jacob's move to Haran, and (6) Jacob's time in Haran (see pp. 7, 115, 138–39, 432, 494).

In short, while Goldingay's volume is easy to read and contains many innovative and thoughtful reflections on the book of Genesis, behind the refreshing veneer lie the same critical presuppositions that simply do not treat the text with the reverence and care it deserves. Thus, I could not recommend it to a layperson. Those who are sympathetic to Goldingay's critical views will no doubt have a more positive recommendation. Scholars will appreciate its many insights, though lack of serious engagement with others and lack of evidence for many of the views expressed mar its overall value even for these readers.

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Voices from the Ruins: Theodicy and the Fall of Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible. By Dalit Rom-Shiloni. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021, xvii + 562 pp., $70.00.

Reading the many calamities recounted in the Hebrew Bible raises important questions regarding theodicy. Perhaps one of the most notable questions is: Where was God in times of suffering? In the current volume, however, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Tel Aviv University, asks somewhat different questions from the perspectives of the ancient human beings who were living in that context and culture: (1) What did the ancient authors (e.g., prophets, kings, historiographers, and poets) say about God's role during the destruction and the exile? (2) How do these authors' assessments of God differ from each other?

Rom-Shiloni's book consists of two major parts with an introduction and a conclusion. In her short introduction, the author proposes two fundamental frameworks to answer the two questions given above. The first is a descriptive theodical discourse, and the second is a theological-phenomenological study of the conceptions of God. She derives both frameworks from sixth-century-BCE biblical texts, including historiography, prophetic literature, and selected laments from Psalms and Lamentations (p. 5).

Part 1 ("Questions of Methods," chaps. 1–4) lays the foundation for her own descriptive theology. In chapter 1, Rom-Shiloni suggests that traditional scholarship on theodicy is exclusively devoted to interpreting it as the justification of God—in other words, defending God as a righteous judge at the expense of human suffering. Analyzing Jeremiah 21:1–7 and Lamentations 2 from the perspective of Ronald Green's trilemma of theodicy, she argues that this traditional approach is simplistic and therefore unsatisfying. She proposes that sixth-century-BCE biblical sources provide three multifaceted voices—justification, doubt, and even protest—that attest to varying theodical discourses that do not merely attempt to justify God.

Chapter 2 proposes a framework for a descriptive theology of the Hebrew Bible. Drawing from both Christian and Jewish conceptions of biblical theology, Rom-Shiloni presents six distinguishing criteria regarding the proper aim, principles, methodology, and content of a theology of the Hebrew Bible. She offers her own descriptive and phenomenological theology of the Hebrew Bible, free from later Christian and Jewish retrojections, that focuses primarily on literary and historical contexts (p. 74).

In chapter 3, Rom-Shiloni presents the multiplicity of voices and the diversity of thought among various sixth-century biblical sources: historiography (i.e., the book of Kings), prophetic literature (i.e., Jeremiah and Ezekiel), and selected laments from Lamentations and Psalms. She questions the legitimacy of conceptual dichotomies between official and unofficial voices, between orthodox and nonorthodox perspectives, and between core and peripheral attitudes. She argues that theodical discourse is a better approach to revealing theological distinctions and group-identity struggles among ancient Israel's diverse religious groups, even though these groups shared the same fundamental conception of God as king. In her analysis, Rom-Shiloni makes use of literary approaches and trauma studies alongside conventional literary-historical criticism.

Chapter 4 summarizes the first three chapters and forecasts Part II in light of two intertwined organizing frameworks: theodical discourse (justification, doubt, and protest) and the shared conception of God as king.

Part 2 ("Theodicy as Discourse in the Face of Destruction," chaps. 5–12) develops Rom-Shiloni's perspective on the shared conception of God as king, as attested in various biblical and ANE texts from sixth-century-BCE Judea and Babylon. In chapter 5, Rom-Shiloni argues that all the Judean communities shared a metaphorical conception of God as king during the exilic period. This conception understood God as sovereign over his people, both a warrior and a judge of his people in his action and deed.

The subsequent chapters trace these two major roles of God: God as warrior (chaps. 6–9) and God as judge (chaps. 10–12). In chapter 6, Rom-Shiloni adopts insights from Friedrich Schwally, Gerhard von Rad, and Isaac Seligman and lays out the following schematic conceptions for victory and defeat (pp. 180–86):

> For victory in war, (A) A human hero/king acts alone (e.g., 2 Sam 21:5–22),
> (B) God appoints a savior for Israel (and assists him) (e.g., Judg 3:9),
> and (C) God fights alone against the enemy (e.g., Exod 14:14);
> For defeat in war, (A′) A human enemy/king initiates war against Israel (e.g., 2 Kgs 16:5–18),
> (B′) God summons an enemy against Israel (and assists him) (e.g., Judg 4:2),
> and (C′) God fights alone against his people (e.g., Isa 1:24–28).

Chapter 7 describes the traditional framework for God's role as a righteous savior of his people in the context of distress and suffering, namely the (A′)→(C) conception: If God is savior for his people, the human enemy initiates war against Israel, and God will act alone to save his people. Rom-Shiloni argues that this conception is seen in three types of texts: (1) expression of protest (e.g., Ps 74); (2) expression of doubt (e.g., Jer 8:19–23); and (3) prophetic justification of God as a righteous warrior (e.g., false prophets as represented in Jer 14:13; Ezek 13:10).

Chapter 8 explores God's summoning of the Babylonian troops against Israel, the (B′) conception. This perspective is evident in historiography (e.g., 2 Kgs 21–25) and in the prophetic books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (e.g., Jer 1:13–16; Ezek 7:20–27), which justify God's delivering his people into the hand of their enemies, as well as in several laments in Psalms and Lamentations that protest against God's actions. Particularly important for Rom-Shiloni's analysis is Psalm 44, which she divides into three segments: praise, complaint, and petition. Notably, she argues that the poet of Psalm 44 still believes that God is sovereign warrior and calls upon God for his future deliverance.

Chapter 9 depicts the scenario in which God is the sole executor of the national disaster against Israel: the (C′) conception. This situation primarily appears in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 9:9–10; Ezek 5). Here, it takes the form of doubt and protest against God's total annihilation of the promised land and people, whether by direct divine intervention or natural forces like famine and pestilence.

Chapters 10–12 trace God's role as judge with respect to three major topics: (1) divine justice (chap. 10), (2) transgenerational or immediate generation retribution (chap. 11), and (3) God's mercy (chap. 12). Throughout the chapters, Rom-Shiloni argues that the predominant voice seeks to justify God but that doubt and even protest are nevertheless evident. For example, most passages in the books of Kings, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel support the divine retaliation of God due to Israel's repeated sins (e.g., 2 Kgs 24:20; Jer 5:19; Ezek 7:27), but some portions of Jeremiah and some communal laments in Psalms express the people's innocence in the form of protest against God (e.g., Jer 2:35; 3:4–5; Pss 44:18–23; 80:19).

The closing chapter (chap. 13) summarizes the book and suggests a variety of possible syntheses and applications by means of theodical discourse.

Rom-Shiloni's current book on theodicy in sixth-century-BCE biblical literature is full of fascinating detail, both thought provoking and convincing. In particular, her schematization of God's role as warrior is superb. Nevertheless, several critical comments are in order.

First, at times Rom-Shiloni seems to provide more information than is necessary to make her case. For example, chapter 2 devotes considerable space to the controversies between Christian and Jewish scholars regarding biblical/Hebrew Bible theology before describing her own descriptive Hebrew Bible theology. Much of this is tangential to her main argument, and while interesting, is ultimately unnecessary for the purpose of the book. Readers may find it challenging to sift through all the information Rom-Shiloni provides, especially when it is not directly related to her major points.

Second, and relatedly, some portions of the book inexplicably repeat themselves. For example, the general overview is unnecessarily repeated three times throughout the book (in the preface, the summary part of part 1, and chapter 13). Once again, it would be better for Rom-Shiloni to streamline her argumentation to make it easier for the reader to follow.

Third, Rom-Shiloni successfully demonstrates that ancient Israelite religious groups put forth three different responses to suffering: justification, doubt, and protest. The multifaceted nature of their responses raises an important question: How should these diverse voices be harmonized within a theology of the Hebrew Bible? Unfortunately, Rom-Shiloni does not address this crucial issue. Readers may wish to pursue further discussion regarding this.

In spite of these concerns, Rom-Shiloni's *Voices from the Ruins* is a tour de force in that it skillfully deals with the complicated and weighty issue of theodicy with such scrutiny and precision. Those who are interested in describing how the ancient Israelites thought about their God during the disastrous period will benefit from this book.

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Origins of the Hebrews: New Evidence of Israelites in Egypt from Joseph to the Exodus. By Douglas Petrovich, with an introduction by William D. Barrick. Nashville: New Creation, 2021, xv + 314 pp., $50.00.

Scholars have for decades claimed that archaeology offers no evidence of early Hebrews in Egypt and that we should therefore question the historical reliability of Scripture. In his latest book, Douglas Petrovich challenges modern academic paradigms by presenting new archaeological discoveries that arguably attest to the Israelite sojourn and exodus from Egypt. Petrovich serves as professor of biblical history and exegesis at The Bible Seminary in Katy, Texas. In 2016 he wrote the companion volume, *The World's Oldest Alphabet: Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script* (Carta), which I reviewed in *JETS* 60.4 (2017): 829–31.

The purpose of Petrovich's book is "to persuade any and every objective enthusiast of ancient history that the biblical account of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt (from 1876–1446 BC) and subsequent exodus are sufficiently verifiable as historical, based on the archaeological, epigraphical, and iconographical evidence" (p. 4). Much of the evidence comes from the excavation at Tell el-Dab'a (Avaris/Perunefer/Ezbet Helmi), the most thoroughly excavated site in the ANE. The site sits near the Pelusiac branch of the Nile River in Lower Egypt. It was excavated most recently by the Austrian Archaeological Institute of Cairo under directors Manfred Bietak (1966–2009) and Irene Forstner-Müller (2009–present). Their team did not attempt to correlate the archaeological findings with Israelite history, so Petrovich took up the task himself, though he is certainly not the first Christian scholar to suggest the connections.

The author makes his case methodically and meticulously. At the outset he establishes and synchronizes Israelite and Egyptian chronologies (chap. 2). In the process, he resolves two famous interpretive cruxes: 1) How long did the Israelites remain in Egypt? and 2) What was the date of the exodus? Petrovich concludes that the Israelite residence in Egypt lasted precisely 430 years—twice the length of the 215-year option. Specifically, the sojourn began May 9, 1876 BC and ended with the exodus on April 24, 1446 BC (p. 23). Regarding a twelfth-century exodus, he states, "there is no archaeological or epigraphical evidence whatsoever to support the late exodus view" (p. 3).

The Bible excludes the names of the early pharaohs. Petrovich identifies the abundance pharaoh of Genesis 41:28–29 as Sesostris II (1887–1878 BC), the famine pharaoh as Sesostris III (1878–1840 BC), the pharaoh who did not know Joseph as Amhose (1560–1550 BC), the pharaoh who killed the Hebrew baby boys as Thutmose I (1529–1516 BC), the pharaoh who drove Moses out of Egypt as Thutmose III (1504–1450 BC), and the exodus pharaoh as Amenhotep II (1453–1416 BC) (pp. 21, 145–48, 164).

The author demonstrates that the Asiatics living at Avaris were Hebrews rather than Canaanites by analyzing the Levantine pottery, a duckbill axe found in a tomb, the architectural structures, and the statue of a seated Asiatic man (pp. 40–56). He then argues for extrabiblical attestations of Jacob, Joseph, Joseph's two oldest sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and Manasseh's son Shekem (chap. 4). Pe-

trovich revises his treatment of Sinai 115 from his previous monograph and gives nine reasons why Sinai 115 was written by Manasseh (pp. 81–85). He states that Manasseh and possibly Ephraim invented the Hebrew alphabet at Avaris in the nineteenth century BC (pp. 85–86).

The book contains many other intriguing proposals. For instance, Joseph had at least five names (pp. 93–94). The exodus pharaoh, Amenhotep II, did not drown in the sea (p. 174). Not only that, but Amenhotep II captured 3,600 Apiru (Hebrews) during the forty-year wilderness wanderings according to the Memphis Stele and Berlin Pedestal (pp. 137, 162, 186–92).

Following the trajectory of an important 2001 article in *JETS*, Petrovich contends that a limited number of select terms in the Pentateuch were written anachronistically by anonymous scribes after Moses (p. 35). Three such terms are the toponyms *Rameses* and *Pithom* in passages like Exodus 1:11 (pp. 34–35, 138) and the title *pharaoh* used of kings predating Thutmose III, such as the king who did not know Joseph in Exodus 1:8 (pp. 64, 144).

Even if a scholar does not categorically reject the possibility of anachronisms (scribal updates) in Scripture, several questions still linger. Should we insist on the presence of anachronisms based on the absence of archaeological evidence? When do we ignore the interpretive axiom "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence"? No one assumes that the name Reagan could not have appeared in American society before the twentieth century, so why must we suppose that the name Rameses could not have existed in Egyptian society before the thirteenth century BC? The name Rameses was attested before the thirteenth century BC, appearing for example as the name of a prominent nobleman on a fifteenth-century BC tomb inscription (Gleason L. Archer, "An Eighteenth Dynasty Rameses," *JETS* 17:1 [1974]: 49–50). Could Moses himself have applied the later title "pharaoh" to earlier kings? Moreover, was a later reader's presumed ignorance enough justification to update a text? Why not accept the *prima facie* literary evidence—that Moses wrote the terms "Rameses," "Pithom," and "pharaoh"—even if early epigraphic verifications currently elude us? In light of these factors, I think Petrovich overstates his point about the anachronisms being "all but certain" (p. 35). Regardless, the early exodus position does not depend on scribal updating, in my estimation.

In my copy of the book, it was difficult to read the last word of each line on the verso pages because the type encroached into the book's binding; the inner margin is far too thin.

Petrovich purports to make "major, field-altering discoveries" (p. xiii). He welcomes scrutiny and hopes that his book will generate healthy dialogue in the search for truth: "An academic discourse consequently can begin, preferably apart from one on the level of mere cynicism, and certainly one devoid of denial or unscholarly dismissiveness" (p. 167). In that spirit I warmly recommend this volume to aficionados of ancient Egyptian and Israelite history.

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ESV Expository Commentary, Volume 2: Deuteronomy–Ruth. By August H. Konkel, David Reimer, Miles V. Van Pelt, and Mary Willson Hannah. Edited by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021, 752 pp., $60.00.

Several volumes in the ESV Expository Commentary series have been published already, with two more yet to reach the completion of the series. The editors describe their expectations for each volume: exegetically sound, biblically theological, globally aware, broadly reformed, doctrinally conversant, pastorally useful, application-minded, and efficient in expression (pp. 11–12). The introduction for each book commentary addresses the following topics: overview, date and occasion, genre and literary features, theology of the book, the relationship of the book to the rest of the Bible and to Christ, suggestions for preaching from the book, interpretive challenges, and a detailed outline of the book. Some of the authors add a heading or two unique to their book. Each of the authors divide their assigned book into several pericopes. Each pericope has these elements: full ESV text for the passage, a section overview, a pericope outline, a commentary section, and a response or key observations section.

The volume opens with a commentary on Deuteronomy written by August H. Konkel, professor of OT at McMaster Divinity College. As one who loves the book of Deuteronomy, I felt quite at home with most of Konkel's exposition. Deuteronomy represents a reaffirmation of the Sinaitic Covenant (Exod–Lev). It does not address everything from that former presentation of Yahweh's covenant expectations, but it emphasizes core ideas that clearly result from heartfelt obedience.

Konkel embraces a late date for Israel's exodus from Egypt, which points to a 13th-century-BC setting for Moses's speeches. He also cites parallels between the structure of Deuteronomy and a few ANE treaties that point to a second millennium BC setting for the book instead of a setting in the first millennium BC. Konkel suggests that although Moses plays a primary role in the book's composition, the canonical book of Deuteronomy may have been completed in the period of the divided monarchy (p. 24).

There are many things about the message of Deuteronomy that Konkel grasps well. Here are just a few examples. First, the Mosaic Law involves more than rules, since Yahweh's covenant demands are integrally connected to the covenant relationship Yahweh pursues with his servant nation. Second, the author clearly distinguishes between ANE and Mosaic laws (really Yahweh's laws given through Moses). Shamash, the Babylonian god of justice, was merely the custodian of laws or cosmic truths. The ideal of law was above the gods and humans. With the Mosaic Law, Yahweh gave those laws for his chosen people and intended that the king who would rule over Israel would embody those laws. Third, as Yahweh delineates his identity through his laws, his actions, and his activity on their behalf, his people can grow in their knowledge of their God. That very knowledge of God will enable Israel to live with a circumcised heart.

David Reimer, honorary senior lecturer in the School of Divinity, University of St. Andrews, wrote the commentary on Joshua. Reimer writes with clarity and covers the main interpretive issues in Joshua with an exposition emphasis.

For the date of Joshua's composition, although he refers to a few examples of "early memories," Reimer points to the exilic period for the final shaping of the book. This final shape "seems to have been achieved with the benefit of hindsight gained in the exilic period" (p. 315).

Regarding genre, Reimer points out that chapters 6 and 8–11 are "conquest accounts" and "bear comparison" to ANE annals recording the exploits of kings (p. 315) and are characterized by hyperbole. The description of the Bronze Age incineration of Hazor provides a remarkable intersection between biblical memory and contemporary archaeology (p. 429).

Reimer points to two key interpretive challenges in the book: the issue of genocide (*ḥerem*) and the significance of the concept of land (pp. 318–21). First, concerning "genocide," Reimer sees this language emphasizing the severity of God, but states that the extremity suggested by that language never really happened and that the gospel message demonstrates the love and grace of God. As part of his minimizing the reality of "genocide" in Joshua, Reimer writes that "Bronze Age people have a Bronze Age deity" (p. 320). He explains that ancient conquest accounts use conventional language and communicate in forms that are rooted in that time and place. He also contends that NT perspectives must temper our understanding of the significance of *ḥerem* in Joshua.

Second, Reimer recognizes the central role that land plays in Joshua's theology. He suggests that the "frailty of Joshua's achievement" (especially seen in chaps. 1–3) demonstrates that concrete land is a preliminary way to refer to something much more enduring (p. 321). The emphasis on land in Joshua is replaced or redefined by the NT's pointing to salvation rest and a heavenly destination.

Miles V. Van Pelt, the Alan Hayes Jr. professor of OT and biblical languages at Reformed Theological Seminary, wrote the Judges commentary. He grasps well the big ideas (and small details) of this sad yet impactful book. He highlights numerous ways Yahweh demonstrated his faithfulness to his covenant people in Judges. The "foil" to that consistent reality is the "ongoing and ever-increasing unfaithfulness of Israel to the Lord." The core of what everyone deemed to be right (Judg 17:6; 21:25) involved Israel's worship of various other "gods" (p. 511).

Van Pelt presents Samuel as the likely primary author of the book, allowing for late additions, with the book reaching completion after the establishment of the Davidic monarchy. Even though the book does not present the author's name, Van Pelt emphasizes that the Spirit worked through this prophetic figure to bring the book of Judges to its final canonical form. Working through human authors (Spirit-enabled instruments), the Lord is the primary agent behind biblical revelation.

In Van Pelt's resolution of the ethical dilemma of extreme violence (some kind of genocide) in the conquest and settlement of the land of promise, he offers two points (p. 520). First, Yahweh's requirement that the Israelites wipe out the Canaanites was intended to protect the Israelites from adopting their corrupt worship. Second, this command of complete destruction "foreshadows the eschatolog-

ical judgment that will come against all sin and those who do not repent from it by placing faith in Christ alone" (p. 520).

Another set of interesting conclusions is tied to Judges 11. Van Pelt takes Jephthah's statement of 300 years that had elapsed since the conquest at face value (pp. 610–11), implying acceptance of the early date of Israel's exodus from Egypt (cf. p. 512). He interprets the language about Jephthah sacrificing his daughter as symbolically fulfilled through perpetual service at the Tabernacle (pp. 613–15).

The Ruth commentary is written by Mary Willson Hannah, the director of Women in Ministry at the Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, TN. Hannah grabs the reader's attention with her first sentence: "The book of Ruth celebrates the Lord's sovereign rule over his people in an age marked by spiritual and moral anarchy" (p. 679). Against that dark backdrop, the book of Ruth "highlights the Lord's mercy to advance his salvation purposes even when his people seem to be in moral freefall" (p. 679). That clarity of expression characterizes Hannah's work throughout her commentary. Looking at the structure of Ruth, she grasps that big change from beginning to end, from emptiness to fullness. Hannah points out that with the book's exciting culmination (4:17b-22), the Lord resolves Naomi's predicament in a way that ultimately resolves the predicament of the entire nation (p. 680).

Although the events of Ruth are set in the context of the chaotic Judges era, Hannah suggests that the book could have reached completion in the early monarchical or postexilic eras. She does not seem to favor one option over the other.

The narrative of Ruth includes vintage aspects of that genre: plot introduction, plot resolution, four scenes, and a gripping epilogue. Hannah walks her readers through the interaction of divine providence and human agency in Ruth. Somewhat like Esther (though mentioning names of God several times), Ruth shows God orchestrating decisions and events without explicit intervention. Human choices and even the lack of human intentionality are part of this narrative that reaches its divinely intended end. A classic example of that intersection is Ruth's looking for a place to glean where she "happened to come across" one of the fields owned by Boaz (2:3), part of Yahweh's intentions (p. 700).

In summary, these four authors accomplished the objectives laid out in the series introduction. In addition, they wrote with clarity and expositional focus. As with any commentary, any reader will have interpretive quibbles along the way. I did find myself wishing Reimer had given more attention to concrete historical issues in a book like Joshua that gives attention to those issues. His understanding of the authorship of Joshua seemed less clear as well. Regardless, his exposition was engaging and helpful.

Each commentary would be an asset for teachers or pastors with expositional concerns as their primary pursuit. The volume deserves a place on the shelf of lay teachers and pastors alongside other commentaries focused on exposition.

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Psalms, vol. 1: *Psalms 1–72*. By James M. Hamilton Jr. Evangelical Biblical Theological Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021, xxxiii + 677 pp., $44.99.

Psalms, vol. 2: *Psalms 73–150*. By James M. Hamilton Jr. Evangelical Biblical Theological Commentary. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021, xxix + 569 pp., $44.99.

Can the Psalter be rightly understood as a unified book intentionally shaped and seamlessly flowing? James Hamilton convincingly argues and demonstrates this understanding in his two-volume work in the Evangelical Biblical Theological Commentary series—*Psalms 1–72* and *Psalms 73–150*. In so doing, his work stands apart from the majority of commentaries on the Psalter, both conservative and liberal, which frequently utilize disjointed approaches rooted in form criticism.

Volume 1 begins with a succinct yet thorough introduction of 88 pages. While constituting a small portion of the overall work, Hamilton's introduction addresses with clarity and charity the key issues pertaining to the study of the Psalter. Unabashedly evangelical, he argues for a unified view of Psalms while gently critiquing the theories of Gunkel and Mowinckel that pervade other works. Perhaps the most hermeneutically telling statement from Hamilton comes as he writes,

> Against Gunkel, my concern here is with the biblical book of Psalms. The primary context in which an individual psalm must be interpreted is the canonical Psalter in which we find it, and then the broader backdrop is that of the Old Testament canon, which was recognized as an authoritative collection very early. I am consciously choosing not to investigate the history of religion, as Gunkel did, but rather to engage in biblical theology. (1:16)

To this end, Hamilton delivers on his goal.

From the methodological considerations, Hamilton moves to the structure and shaping of the Psalter, with a specific interest in the superscriptions. For the better part of 28 pages, Hamilton provides a detailed analysis of the 116 superscriptions found in Psalms with illustrative tables. Why such detail? Hamilton contends with a plausible, though sparsely footnoted, argument that the superscriptions "were not later additions but integral to the original composition of the individual psalms. Further, I hold the canonical form of the biblical text to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore inerrant and authoritative" (1:47).

Before he moves to the actual commentary, Hamilton posits chiastic structures for the entire Psalter. The purpose of these chiasms, he humbly acknowledges, is not to be "*the definitive* treatment" (1:55–56, his italics) but rather make it easier for the reader "to remember and contemplate" (1:64). Without such modesty and purpose, Hamilton's treatment of the chiastic structures would be woefully underdocumented in regard to linguistics and current research; however, as he intended, the section aids in understanding the flow of Psalms.

Hamilton concludes the introduction with two sections: (1) his thoughts on translating the psalms (more on that below), which he demonstrates throughout the body of the commentary; and (2) his understanding of biblical and theological themes throughout the Psalter. Both of these elements pervade the remainder of

the volumes as Hamilton aptly and consistently follows his prescribed convictions and philosophies.

The remainder of the first volume contains commentary on Book 1 and Book 2 of Psalms while the second volume covers Books 3–5. Each chapter of commentary begins with an overview and structure for the individual psalm. Thereafter, Hamilton provides his translation compared with the text of the CSB followed by a section on linguistic links in surrounding psalms. Finally, and most substantially, Hamilton offers exposition of the psalm, concluding with possible transitional information tying the individual psalms to each other.

Two of these features stand out due to the manner in which Hamilton has linked them and as a result elevate his volumes above the more than forty other volumes on my shelf—his translations and his display of linguistic/thematic ties (at least in his treatment of Book 1). Concerning the linguistic ties thoroughly elucidated throughout his commentary for most of Book 1 but falling away into short summary paragraphs of thematic ties within the remainder of the Books of the Psalter, Hamilton notes, "When I considered the point sufficiently established, I discontinued the documentation of all lexical interconnectedness" (1:91n5). His decision makes sense in light of the painstaking process tied to the work and coupled with its already voluminous size. Should Hamilton revise the work in the future and add these notes on all the psalms, expect the set to expand from two to three volumes. Nevertheless, with the examples of consistent translation and the linguistic/thematic ties provided throughout Book 1, Hamilton's translations continue to represent the connections if the reader will study carefully.

An example is in order, since these features glisten as a shining jewel of the work. Why such a strong claim? For starters, Hamilton, more consistently than most modern English translations, maintains linguistic connections from Biblical Hebrew to the target language so the reader can see the intended links. Consider Psalm 1 and 2 as one example. One inconsistency in the CSB is the rendering of דֶּרֶךְ in Psalm 1:1 and 2:12. Hamilton's translation adequately represents this term and highlights it so the reader can easily follow the connection. Consider also the connection he makes when showing thematic theological connections between Psalms 115 and 116. He writes, "The psalmist said the idols have ears but do not hear in 115:6, and in 116:1–2 Yahweh has inclined his ear and heard the psalmist's supplication" (2:325). While other commenters make observations like this, Hamilton invariably does so throughout both volumes with every psalm.

One last characteristic worth discussing is Hamilton's treatment (and at times lack thereof) of the acrostics in the Psalter—Psalm 9–10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145. For some, such as Psalm 9–10, Hamilton acknowledges the presentation of an acrostic (though incomplete) in *BHS* (1:173n58). Yet he provides no comment beyond this, even maintaining the two be separated to preserve his proposed chiastic structure. For others, such as Psalms 25, 34, and 145, he goes into greater detail, even discussing the absent letters of the acrostic. However, discussion of significance fails to move beyond that acknowledgement. Finally, with those that are mostly or fully complete, such as Psalm 37, 111, 112, and particularly 119, Hamilton notes the presence of the acrostic and briefly elaborates. Only with Psalm

119 does he offer rationale for the use of acrostics in the Hebrew text as he quotes Frank Lothar Hossfield and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalm 101–150*, Hermeneia (Fortress: Minneapolis, 2011), 257 (2:341). For a work aiming to utilize canonical features, Hamilton's scant treatment is curious.

Another curious aspect of the work is the lack of a book introduction for each of the five books of Psalms. Aside from his chiastic structures for each book in the introduction, Hamilton effectively writes as if the five individual books of the Psalter do not exist, presenting no information or arguments related to the intentional shaping of any of the individual books of the Psalter. The inclusion of individual book introductions discussing structures and themes at the start of each book would tighten Hamilton's argument for reading Psalms as a cohesive whole.

Let the reader also note that if text-critical comments are of interest, Hamilton sparsely interacts, and mostly in footnotes. However, such an exclusion should not be seen as a deficiency. Hamilton capably includes the most pressing textual variants. The result of his approach gives the reader an informative yet unobstructed experience for those untrained in Hebrew textual criticism.

Notwithstanding any critiques of this review, Hamilton has provided in two volumes a masterful work whose advantages and strengths exceed my critiques. The author has provided a scholarly and yet pastorally accessible work that will benefit scholars, students, and pastors alike, specifically those seeking to understand the Psalter as a whole and unified work.

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Psalms, Volume 1: The Wisdom Psalms: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. By W. Creighton Marlowe and Charles H. Savelle Jr. Kerux. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021, 227 pp., $27.99.

This commentary is the joint effort of "an expert in biblical exegesis and an experienced homiletician" (back cover) and organized by psalm type; volume 1 focuses on the Wisdom Psalms. Psalms 1, 15, 37, 49, 73, 78, 127, 128, 133, 19, 91, 111, 112, and 119 form that set. Psalm 145, especially verse 20, also gets included, somewhat (pp. 5, 159). Wisdom psalms are "about God's Ways/Righteousness" or "about God's Being/Revelation" (pp. 79, 161).

The opening "Overview of All Preaching Passages" (pp. 13–22) is repeated in the commentary section. The "Introduction to the Psalter" (dealing with the whole) begins its discussion of "Historical Setting" by stating that "the psalms parallel Ugaritic [as distinguished from?], Canaanite, and Egyptian poetry" (p. 33). The section includes tables that deal with "biblical chronology" (pp. 35–36), Psalm 151 from the LXX (p. 37), numbering correlations across versions (p. 38), "Superscription Categories" (p. 39), "The 150 Psalms in Order and by Genre" (pp. 40–46), the Korahite psalms (pp. 50–52), and "Messianic Use of Psalms in the NT" (pp. 60–63). The mixed psalm type of some of the psalms is said to have resulted from "editing or redactions" of "what originally were two. These are Psalms 9, 19, 22, 40, 44, 57,

66, 71, 77, and 89, at least" (p. 46). Yet, it is stated elsewhere that the autographs were "copied and cared for with integrity" (p. 49). Earlier German critical scholarship was highly speculative but Gunkel is an exception (p. 53). The discussion of "theological themes" (pp. 54–66) tells more about the author's interpretive stances. The extensive explanation of the *qere perpetuum* for יְהוָה (pp. 54–55) is revealing concerning the targeted reader. One of the discussions in the introduction is of "El Elyon," although only one out of nineteen occurrences of עֶלְיוֹן in the Psalms is that combination.

The work entertains much ambiguity about the *lamed auctoris*. The Korahite psalms are "Psalms about or by Korah's sons" (pp. 50–52). The superscription of Psalm 145 means "Praise for David" (p. 38), a conclusion disallowed by its content.

A separate introduction to the Wisdom Psalms contains a few oddities. The reference to Ephraim in Psalm 78:9 and to Israel (but not the parallel Jacob) in 78:5, 21 are listed for consideration under "Place of Writing" (p. 72). It seems that the statement, "Wisdom is not really a genre for a psalm …" (p. 74) must have meant to say "Wisdom is not only a genre for a psalm.…"

The "overview" for each psalm has sections titled "Exegetical Idea," "Theological Focus," "Preaching Idea," and "Preaching Pointers." The commentary is organized under "Literary Structure and Themes," "Exposition," "Theological Focus," and "Preaching and Teaching Strategies."

There is a smattering of Hebrew throughout, mostly individual words. The value of such inclusion is not clear (e.g., "The righteous … should not (אַל) get angry" [p. 97]). Other grammatical "insights" when provided are of dubious value: "'evil doers' (מְרֵעִים < רעע) is a participle, suggesting characteristic or frequent moral foolishness" (the assertion would be truer if it were a predicate use and not substantival). Another example: "This second poetic line is obscure. Literally it reads, 'Dwell land!'" (p. 98). The use of a noun without preposition as a locative verbal adjunct is well attested and common in Biblical Hebrew. Moreover, how does it help in interpreting Psalm 37:14 to render glosses such as "they have opened their swords" or "they have walked bows with arrows" except to tell that the commentator knows the more frequent usage of the lexemes involved? For those curious about how פתח and דרך are used with the associations in this passage, no explanation is provided. Hebrew is inconsistently (and at least once incorrectly–אֲדֹנָי) vocalized, there are multiple instances of Hebrew written in the wrong direction (see pp. 56, 59–60, 98), and at least one error by dittography (p. 211).

Although it is valuable to move from the exegetical idea to the homiletical one, the versions of the latter provided are unlikely to excite. Here is the "preaching idea" for Psalm 1: "Successful living involves loving God's Word and understanding the implications of failing to do so" (p. 80)—certainly not a winner in the pulpit. Outlines are not particularly revealing of content. There is for Psalm 15, "The Psalmist's Question; The Psalmist's Answer; The Psalmist's Conclusion" (pp. 89–93). The commentary provides no real interaction with the prosodic character of the text or appeal to literary structural elements that inform interpretation.

The presuppositional posture of the authors shapes the work, and not for greater benefit. The Psalms are just people's response to God. "All psalms fall into

the category of 'human to heaven' communication" (p. 75). Although they say there is more, there is precious little. For them, the OT and the Psalms have little to do with life beyond the grave or the Messiah. "To talk literally about OT Messianic prophecy is an overstatement and anachronistic" (p. 63). They are more confident, in connection with Psalm 22:18, that "clothes David had left behind in a cave were gambled over by the soldiers chasing him in the wilderness" (p. 61). Presupposition is evidence, and shapes the meaning of the text. In my opinion, such perspectives are founded on excessive confidence in pseudo-intellectual scholarship and inadequate acquaintance with the OT's own message and character. Consider for instance, the authors' statement that "the OT commands loving neighbors not enemies (which is consistent with Israel needing to fight enemy nations)" (p. 65). But the OT did command love for "your enemy"/"one who hates you" (Exod 23:4–5). David was aware that there was more to what he composed than responding to God about the law or his circumstances (2 Sam 23:2).

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The Prophets of Israel: Walking the Ancient Paths. By James K. Hoffmeier. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021, 400 pp., $44.99.

James K. Hoffmeier is emeritus professor of OT at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Hoffmeier's expertise is in archeology and the ancient historical context of the OT. He has written *The Prophets of Israel*, as an introductory guide to the prophets designed for the undergraduate student or serious layperson in the church. While the book appears long at 400 pages, it is filled with colorful pictures and is easy to read. In line with Hoffmeier's strengths, the book also highlights much of the historical context that sheds light on biblical material.

Hoffmeier's book is coyly titled, for the name leads the reader to think the work is about the major and minor prophets of the OT, yet it explores much more. *Prophets of Israel* examines the nonliterary prophets (e.g., Elijah, Elisha, and less-famous prophets such as Huldah and Micaiah), prophets who have books named after them, and even NT prophets (e.g., John the Baptist and Jesus).

The book is organized chronologically, beginning with the nonliterary prophets, then dividing the literary prophets by eighth-, seventh-, and sixth-century prophets, and postexilic prophets, concluding with the NT prophets. Within each chapter, the author goes prophet-by-prophet chronologically. In general, the work summarizes the major events of each prophet's life. With the literary prophets, major themes of each prophetic book are explored. Hoffmeier does not present outlines for the prophetic books. In general, he also does not focus on biblical-theological aspects of the books. He frequently mentions NT citations or connections, and at times he explores theology, but his exploration of each book highlights historical context, major events, and themes of the book. In other words, there is little fitting of the books together canonically or exploring how a prophet might contribute to the canon with a particular theme.

Hoffmeier writes his work from a generally conservative and traditional evangelical perspective. For example, he presents some arguments for reading Jonah as not historical but also presents arguments for the historicity of Jonah, citing, for example, an instance of a man who was swallowed by a great fish and survived (pp. 167–68). When it comes to the authorship of Isaiah, Hoffmeier also provides fair arguments from both sides but ultimately argues for eighth-century Isaiah ben Amoz as author. In fact, this is one of the lengthiest discussions of a controversial issue that he provides in the book. Likewise, Hoffmeier presents Daniel as a sixth-century author and prophet who is able to supernaturally predict far-off events, and argues for Zechariah as the single author of his book. While Hoffmeier does not discuss maximalist vs. minimalist interpretations of historical artifacts, he does present the biblical narrative as historically accurate, using the extrabiblical historical data to support the Bible's presentation.

One aspect of the book that detracts from the material regards the presentation. The copy I received was laden with grammatical and typographical errors, to the extent that nearly every other page the reader will find one. Eventually this proved to be a distraction, for mistakes included footnotes on the wrong page or sentences that simply did not make sense. As a minor example, Hoffmeier writes, "We meet Daniel when he as [sic] a young man in his teens" (p. 332). If readers can ignore these mistakes, they will profit greatly from the content.

Another small weakness concerns the chapter on NT prophets. This chapter did not contribute much new information, as it provided a brief overview of the lives of figures like John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. However, many readers know basic information about these characters. The most helpful aspect of the chapter was to consider John the Baptist in line with the previous OT prophets. Also, Hoffmeier did not delve into the much-debated question of the nature of NT prophecy, instead providing a simple overview of the prophetic gift in the NT. It would probably have been best to have steered clear of the issue of NT prophecy altogether.

The outstanding feature of this book is the historical background the author provides for readers, illuminating the biblical material greatly. For example, when discussing Balaam, Hoffmeier shows where Balaam's home, Pethor, is located and gives the evidence for our knowledge of that place. This information reveals that Pethor is about three hundred miles north of Moab (p. 27), highlighting the lengths to which the king of Moab went to obtain the services of the pagan diviner. Moreover, Hoffmeier presents data from Deir 'Alla about an inscription that mentions Balaam and his book, further reinforcing the historical accuracy of the prophet's existence (p. 29).

Relatedly, Hoffmeier presents this historical information in a very engaging manner with his use of maps, images, and illustrations. The images range from modern-day pictures of locations (such as Moresheth), to pictures of ancient artifacts (seals with inscriptions of biblical characters' names), to drawings of biblical scenes (DaVinci's "Last Supper"). For example, although he does not discuss the artifact, he includes a picture of a coin stamped with Alexander the Great's portrait. Notably, Alexander is shown with a ram's horn on his head (p. 340). This provides

understanding for Daniel's prophecy of a horned beast that would arise. The images add much interest to the book and make it easier to read.

A book comparable to this one is J. Gordon McConville, *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to the Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016). Hoffmeier's *Prophets of Israel* differentiates itself in its simplicity and engaging presentation. McConville's work is likely more suited to seminary students while Hoffmeier's is geared towards undergraduates. Additionally, Hoffmeier presents more conservative views on issues such as dating. Hoffmeier also focuses more on historical context, while McConville delves more into exegetical issues (such as the nature of Gomer's "harlotry"). McConville also restricts his work to the prophetic books, while Hoffmeier includes the nonliterary prophets and NT material.

Overall, Hoffmeier presents an informative and engaging introduction to the prophets of Israel. This book is highly recommended for the author's intended audience of undergraduates or serious laypeople. If one wants to teach on the prophets with emphasis on the historical background, *Prophets of Israel* is definitely the place to take students.

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The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. By Thomas Renz. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021, xxxix + 703 pp., $56.00.

Thomas Renz's tome, a refreshed volume in the NICOT series, is the culmination of more than twenty years of work and is worthy of being considered the *crème de la crème* in evangelical scholarship today. Written for scholars and pastors alike, this technical commentary is extremely well-researched. It addresses almost all major textual, exegetical, theological, and red herring issues that have been raised concerning these biblical texts in recent years. With this volume, Renz has contributed immensely to both the academy and the church. If we were to situate Renz's volume within academia, it exudes the quality of the evangelical historical-grammatical tradition, only modernized and turbocharged!

The commentary begins with a succinct "Introduction to Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah," where Renz addresses recent scholarship relating to the nature of these prophetic books. He discusses their ancient manuscripts, place in the canon, unity, and how these three books fit within the Book of the Twelve. Then Renz delineates all the major constituent units of the three books and provides a short historical outline of the late Neo-Assyrian and early Neo-Babylonian periods.

In contrast to many commentaries published in the last century, Renz does not dedicate entire segments to dating or authorship issues. To be sure, these issues are dealt with carefully at various points in the volume, but his preliminary/methodological discussions have clearly shifted away from an emphasis on dating, authorship, and historical matters.

Several points are noteworthy on Renz's approach. He has made it clear that he holds to an evangelical position, and that the OT and NT are God's Word (pp. 87–88). Renz reads primarily from the Masoretic text. He examines variants, provides detailed notes on textual issues and translation, and is resistant to making emendations to the text just to resolve textual issues. He is also open about his skepticism regarding redactional-historical critical reconstructions (p. 2).

Although Renz shows he is well-read on recent scholarship concerning the unity of the Book of the Twelve, he has not jumped onto the bandwagon. He remains unconvinced that individual text units "belong together as chapters of a carefully constructed book that develops an argument or whether they form an anthology … that share similar themes and motifs" (p. 5; cf. pp. 46, 430). For him, the literary structure of a biblical book cannot be "right or wrong but rather more or less appropriate or successful" (p. 16). Hence, Renz maintains a "neither-nor" stance, and distances himself from both the older, redactional, and the more recent, canonical approaches to the text.

The commentary of more than seven hundred pages devotes 170 pages to Nahum, 224 pages to Habakkuk, and 423 pages to Zephaniah. Each biblical book receives its own "Introduction," where Renz addresses three things: the profile of the book (e.g., macrostructure, language, and style); the development of the book (e.g., origins and redaction); and the rhetorical function of the book (e.g., reading the book in the Book of the Twelve, in the canon, and reception history).

The introduction is followed by the "Text and Commentary" section, where each book's major constituent units are discussed in detail. Every unit (e.g., Nahum 1:2–10) is commented on under four recurring headings: (1) "Translation and Textual Notes," where Renz provides his original translation with footnotes addressing variant readings, as well as textual, grammatical, morphological, and translational issues; (2) "Composition," which addresses the shape and formal elements of the literary unit, giving attention to inclusios, changes of subject, repetitions, and more; (3) "Commentary," a segment that captures Renz's explanation and exegesis, dealing with key terms, interacting with various scholars, and offering his interpretation; and (4) "Reflection," which highlights a central concern and implication for the life and praxis of readers. Renz also offers insight on how these texts are connected to the rest of the Bible and to Christ. At twelve different places in the volume, Renz offers excurses on a particular topic of interest arising from the text.

The distinctive character and value of this commentary rest in its diligent study that panders neither to traditional nor new winds of research. The commentary provides an extremely close reading of the text; each verse is examined under a scholarly microscope from all angles. Renz writes with good clarity and supports his comments with prodigious footnotes. One interesting treatment of grammatical issues relates to the concurrent use of *yiqtol* and *qatal* forms in Habakkuk 3:3–7. Renz argues that the *yiqtol* forms express the dynamic progression of unfolding events and the *qatal* forms describe the effects of the events and completed actions (pp. 118, 355).

Renz is judicious in his reconstruction of the historical setting underlying the text, effectively using many propositions from academia without blindly adopting

them. He is also sensitive toward the literary, poetic, and rhetorical devices of the text. He has identified many chiasms (pp. 125, 140, 150, 156, 627) and rhetorically significant words in the books (pp. 36–37, 431).

I found several points in the commentary on Nahum remarkable. Renz provides a number of word and motif studies, and his treatment of Nahum contains half the book's excurses. For instance, his extended discussion on "Different Hebrew Terms for Lion" and "Lion Imagery in Assyria," is insightful (pp. 141–47). Theologically, Renz's treatment and reflection on the motif of an avenging God in Nahum is significant.

The more noteworthy comments on the book of Habakkuk concern red herring issues on 2:4–5 (the "faith vs. faithfulness" debate), historical dating of Habakkuk (609–597 BCE; p. 210), and the superscript/postscript in 1:1; 3:1, 19b (pp. 221–23, 334–43, 413–18). Renz also rightly gives sustained attention to the complaint/prayer of Habakkuk regarding injustice and violence, and the response of God (see especially his treatment of 1:12–2:3, pp. 263–84). This is a very helpful section relevant to a world currently ravaged by the COVID pandemic.

For Zephaniah, Renz has provided a lengthy excursus on "Finding the Book of the Law," which serves to date the book early in Josiah's reign (630s or 620s BCE; pp. 432–43) and possibly before his reforms. Renz's treatment on the "Day of YHWH" will recalibrate any eschatological overemphasis by some readers. He argues that the original referent of this day is the destruction of Jerusalem in the sixth century BCE, an event that is in the past for its readers (p. 514; cf. p. 488), and yet it is also a day of judgment that lies ahead.

Renz's work is about twice the length of O. Palmer Robertson's earlier NICOT volume on the same letters. This is largely due to the recurring "Reflection" section after each constituent unit and the twelve excurses. These additions, however, make the commentary much more useful for preachers and pastors. Comparatively, Renz focuses less on the discussion of prophetic speeches as a form-critical category and offers less emphasis on history, dating, and authorship because of the way the volume is structured. On the other hand, Renz gives more attention to manuscripts and variants (benefiting from recent discoveries), compositional issues, and poetic and rhetorical discussions. Renz also provides an extensive treatment of how each of the three books is heard within the Book of the Twelve, a growing area of interest in the last thirty years. Renz has not used discourse analysis—a recent approach—as an interpretive methodology, as seen in the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series.

Renz is not afraid to use terms like "tentative" when stating his positions. At the same time, he can be firm in rejecting various academic propositions with which he interacts. While this volume includes pastors/preachers as readers, those who can read Hebrew (or its transliteration) will benefit most from this tome. It will be less useful for beginners because of the sheer number of technical details. It is more likely that this volume will function like a well-stocked toolbox, where one looks for what he or she needs when that need arises.

As a final word, this is a first-class, standard-setting resource. If you own a copy, you can be sure you have solid scholarship on the books of Nahum, Habak-

kuk, and Zephaniah. This volume will also be an important addition both to pastors' bookshelves and to reference sections of libraries.

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Interpreting and Living God's Law at Qumran. Miqṣat Ma'aśe Ha-Torah, Some of the Works of the Torah (4QMMT). Scripta Antiquitatis Posterioris ad Ethicam Religionemque Pertinentia 37. Edited by Reinhard G. Kratz. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020, xi + 249 pp., €79,00 / $90.00, cloth.

The volume under review provides the most recent edition and discussion of the Qumran text 4QMMT since the official critical edition of the text published in 1994 by Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell (DJD 10) who had published initial reports in 1985 ("An Unpublished Halakhic Letter," in *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, April 1984* [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985], 400–407; "An Unpublished Halakhic Letter from Qumran," *Israel Museum Journal* 4 [1985]: 9–12). Subsequent editions of 4QMMT were published by Elisha Qimron (with J. H. Charlesworth, D. A. Hume, J. B. F. Miller, S. J. Pfann, H. W. M. Rietz, "Some Works of the Torah 4Q394–4Q399 (=4QMMT^{a-f}) and 4Q313," in *Damascus Document II: Some Works on the Torah and Related Documents*, DSS 3 [Louisville: Westminster John Knox; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 187–251), and again by Elisha Qimron (*The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew Writings*, vol. 2 [Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2013 (Hebrew)]). The new edition and the nine essays of the present volume were discussed at a colloquium held at Göttingen in 2017.

Reinhard Kratz, professor of OT at the university of Göttingen, introduces the volume with a survey of the discovery and interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and, more specifically, of the content, the manuscripts, the editions of, and research on the text entitled *Miqṣat Ma'aśe Ha-Torah,* Some of the Works of the Torah (pp. 3–30). The discussion of the findings (manuscripts of biblical books, fragments of para-biblical writings, writings of the community reflected in the texts), the problem of historical contextualization, the witness of the texts for a profile of the community (juridical, liturgical, historical, polemical, and prophetic areas of tradition), and the historical context is one of the most succinct, yet thoroughly informative, summaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Kratz concludes that the Community "belongs to that branch of Judaism which we may call 'biblical Judaism' and represents an advanced yet radicalized stage of this branch of Judaism" (pp. 17–18), next to which existed the Hasidim and the Essenes, all groups that formed an alternative to the "more modest and established form of biblical Judaism" officially established by the Maccabees (Hasmoneans) and represented by Sadducees and Pharisees (p. 18). The author of 4QMMT, a letter to an anonymous recipient (the only letter found among the Qumran scrolls), preserved in several copies, deals with "questions of legal interpretation which were disputed among the different groups of biblical Judaism" (p. 18). The letter begins with a discussion of

calendar questions (section A), of which only small fragments survive. The halakhah (section B) discusses twenty cases that can be divided into three groups: (1) sacrifices: grain, cooking of sacrifice, sacrifice (of the gentiles?), sacrifice of well-being, the red cow, hides of animals, place of sacrifices, slaughtering and eating of a mother animal or pregnant animal; (2) participants in the cult: Ammonites, Moabites, and other impure people; the blind; the deaf; (3) questions of purity: liquids, dogs, fruit trees as levies for the priests, the leper, bones of the dead, whoring, interbreeding of animals; the final two cases concern the intermixing of textile materials and the intermixing of priests. The parenesis (section C) refers to the kings of Israel and Judah as examples of blessings and curses; both the Torah and the Prophets are treated as authoritative scriptures, i.e., blessings and curses are determined by adherence to the Torah and also by the correct interpretation and application of the Torah (p. 20). Kratz dates 4QMMT to the end of the second and the beginning of first century BC (pp. 21–22) and explains the significance of the text in terms of the fact that it "offers an interpretation of the Torah that significantly anticipates later rabbinic tradition, the origins of which are thus demonstrably older than was once assumed (p. 22).

The new edition by Kratz (pp. 31–53) provides only the reconstructed composite text of 4QMMT, extant in six manuscripts, based on 4Q394 as the principal manuscript that contains five of a total of eight columns, with translation and textual notes. Different from the previous editions, the composite text is based on a single preserved manuscript and thus on an "actual" text (p. 30). The new edition presents the conventional form of citation in the margin. This means, e.g., that the line in which the phrase מקצת מעשי התורה (*miqtsat ma'ase ha-torah*, "some of the works of the Torah") occurs, would be referred to in the Kratz edition as MMT viii, 13, which corresponds in the Qimron editions to 4Q398 14–17 II, 3 (citation according to the individual manuscripts of the text) or C26–27 (citation according to the so-called Composite Text in DJD 10). The translation of Kratz does not differ much from Qimron 2006. The continuation of the text after the reference to "some of the works of the Torah" until the end of the letter is translated by Kratz as follows: "For we have seen with you wisdom and knowledge of the Torah. Reflect on all these things and seek from Him that he strengthens your counsel and keep far from you the plans of evil and the counsel of Belial, so that you may rejoice at the end of the time, finding that some of our words are in order. And it shall be reckoned to you as righteousness, when you do what is right and good in His eyes, for the good of you and of Israel" (viii, 14–18 = C27–32); Qimron translates: "For we have seen in you prudence and knowledge of the Torah. Consider all these (things) and seek of him that he make straight your counsel, and that he remove from you evil thoughts and the counsel of Belial so that you might rejoice in the latter time, when you will find that some of our pronouncements are true. And that it might be accounted to you as righteousness, when you do what is pleasing and good before him for your good and for Israel."

Eibert Tigchelaar comments on the material reconstruction and paleographical dating of 4QMMT (pp. 57–65). He reassesses the dating of the manuscripts (not the text itself) of 4QMMT in the *editio princeps*, suggesting an earlier date within

the range 75/50 BC to AD 25. The oddities in the orthography of 4Q394, which Kratz uses as his base text, may suggest that the manuscript "was copied for personal purposes" (p. 65). Noam Mizrahi investigates the language of 4QMMT (pp. 67–83, indebted to Qimron's discussion in *DJD* 10), which is largely modeled after Biblical Hebrew. Mizrahi comments on lexical semantics, grammar (morphology, phonology), syntax, and discursive and text-linguistic aspects, concluding that the letter genre allowed the author greater freedom in terms of linguistic register and that the text thus "deviates from Biblical Hebrew more than any other work found in Qumran" (p. 83). Some deviations are precursors of Rabbinic Hebrew, some appear to be localized innovations, and in both cases the influence of Aramaic is evident.

Reinhard Kratz, in the essay "Law and Narrative: 4QMMT and the Hebrew Bible" (pp. 85–104), discusses biblical quotations and allusions in the halakhah of the text and places them in the context of precursors and parallels in biblical and para-biblical literature in terms of the connection between law and the narrative of Israel's history whose kings experienced the curse of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. The historical-theological exegesis of scripture and the eschatological parenesis in the final section of the text connects with biblical and nonbiblical texts, especially penitential prayers (p. 99). Moses and the Prophets are history, prophecy, and law, all of which "must be observed, interpreted for every single case, and practiced (at the temple in Jerusalem!)" (p. 101). Jonathan Ben-Dov discusses the calendar in 4QMMT (pp. 105–16), copied by the scribe of 4Q394, who added it to MMT "presumably because he considered the calendar to be a significant factor in defining the sectarian identity and in the need for a schism" (p. 116).

Charlotte Hempel places 4QMMT "in the context of the Dead Sea Scrolls and beyond" (pp. 117–36), offering a fresh reading of the legal debate reflected in 4QMMT by investigating the "they-group" in the text on questions of cultic purity and propriety, priestly responsibilities and privileges, forbidden sexual relations, other exclusions (the presence of the blind and the deaf in the sanctuary, dogs, and people afflicted with skin disease), and the special status of Jerusalem. Hempel finds that 4QMMT is not the missing link that explains the movement's secession from fellow Jews regarding the interpretation of the law, as some have thought; rather, both sides of the halakhic arguments reflected in the text are attested elsewhere in the Scrolls and are "part and parcel of a continuum that has left its mark on other texts from the corpus of the Scrolls" such as 4QOrdinances and the Damascus Document (pp. 135–36). In other words, the halakhic debate in MMT reflects "internal discourse as much as engagement with outsiders," which also explains the irenic tone of the work (p. 136). Vered Noam, comparing the halakhah of 4QMMT with rabbinic halakhah (pp. 137–59), finds that the rulings of MMT that strive to protect the sphere of holiness from the profane are stricter than the halakhic position of the opponents as well as of the later rabbinic framework, both of whom "open gateways" between the realm of holiness and the realm of the profane.

John J. Collins investigates "4QMMT and History" (pp. 161–78), tentatively agreeing with those who think that the halakhic rulings in section B were written

independently of section C and with the interpretation of MMT as belonging to the epistolary genre (despite the fact that the text lacks an epistolary greeting). He then surveys the *dramatis personae*, viz., "we," "you," and "they": the authors' group ("we") represents the movement which, at the time of composition of MMT, may, or may not, have separated from the rest of the people; the addressee was mostly plausibly a ruler, an authority figure who must be treated with deference (Strugnell: the ruler who would become the Wicked Priest; Qimron: one of the Hasmonean kings); the opponents ("they") are not as clearly the Pharisees as some think (e.g., Qimron), but since the authors' group appears to have had an approach to halakhic issues similar to that of the Sadducees, it seems that the Pharisees figured prominently among the covenanters' opponents. As regards the date of MMT, Collins defends his view that the recipient of the letter was Hyrcanus II (installed as high priest in 76 BC), who is a plausible candidate for the "Wicked Priest" mentioned in the Pesharim. The content of MMT suggests that the movement of the Community arose because of halakhic disputes, not because of disputes over the high priesthood.

Lutz Doering investigates 4QMMT in the context of Hellenistic literature (pp. 179–98), surveying discourses on calendar and law, official and other corporate letters, epistolary treatises, and letter-essays. He sees MMT aligned with "the epistolary form of communication" (p. 198). Jörg Frey investigates the significance of MMT for NT scholarship and Paul's "works of the law" (pp. 199–216). MMT has been regarded as relevant in the debate triggered by the work of J. D. Dunn and N. T. Wright who have taken up, in various ways, the interpretation of "works of the law" in Paul and in the context of Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism by E. P. Sanders (pp. 202–7). Four parallels between MMT and Paul's controversy about "works of the law" are noticeable (pp. 209–11): (1) purity concerns were a reason for separation in Second Temple Judaism; (2) both Paul in Galatians and MMT draw on the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27–30; (3) MMT has the only exact Hebrew parallel (מעשי התורה) to the phrase ἔργα νόμου, although Frey points out that the Hebrew expression in MMT refers not merely to precepts that the law demands to be obeyed but focuses on doing "what is right and good"; (4) the author of MMT connects the works of the law with righteousness in an eschatological context: the criterion of being considered righteous by God "is the teaching and practice of lawful works, based on the adoption of the correct halakhic interpretation" (p. 211). The attestation of the expression "works of the law" in MMT shows that the theological thought of the Apostle Paul was "deeply rooted within the debates of (Palestinian) Second Temple Judaism" (p. 215). Frey concludes with the observation that the "sensational" nature of MMT, as perceived at the time of its publication, soon calmed down, "and by now the text is left to Scrolls specialists" (p. 215), valuable for NT scholars in terms of the techniques and varieties of early Jewish (and early Christian) letters, the emergence of the authority of Scripture, and "the terminological background of Paul's theology of grace" (p. 216).

The volume concludes with a bibliography, and indexes of sources and subjects. NT scholars will benefit from the detailed philological, literary, historical, and halakhic interpretation of 4QMMT in this volume, an important text from the

Dead Sea Scrolls that has probably been given too much significance in the "New Perspective" debates about Paul and the law. Before OT and Jewish (and Greek and Roman) texts can be compared with statements in texts of the NT, the former must be first studied on their own terms, as must the latter.

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The Book of Acts as Story: A Narrative-Critical Study. By David R. Bauer. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021, 304 pp., $32.99 paper.

Although the number of commentaries on Acts is growing, and although narrative or literary approaches to various topics in Acts are increasing, there have not been many narrative-critical *commentaries* on Acts since Tannehill's landmark publication in 1990, over thirty years ago (a notable exception is Scott Spencer's 2004 volume, *Journeying through Acts* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004]). So Bauer's "narrative-critical" study is a welcome addition to a surprisingly small field.

Bauer's book is divided into two main parts: the first three chapters (66 pages) offer an introduction to narrative criticism, with examples drawn from Acts; the other four chapters (182 pages), are a commentary on Acts. Both parts of the book are valuable and insightful, and both provide clear explanations of the value of literary approaches to Acts.

Chapter 1 briefly outlines the relationship between Luke and Acts and discusses the importance of genre. Bauer concludes that since Acts is "the second volume of a two-volume work," it has its own message and structure, yet since Luke assumes the reader of Acts knows the Gospel of Luke, Acts "cannot be fully or even adequately understood without reference to the Gospel" (pp. 6–7). Then, after defining genre as "a repeated and consequently familiar combination of content and arrangement of that content," Bauer argues against categorizing Acts as biography or novel and concludes with many that Acts is best understood as belonging to the genre of ancient historiography. Although he mentions the influence of OT and Second Temple Jewish histories in a footnote (p. 9 n. 18), the significance of this particular approach to historiography could perhaps have been added to Bauer's discussion of genre to provide additional help to the interpreter of Acts (e.g., the author's view of God and history, truth, and assurance).

The second chapter is a succinct but substantial introduction to the discipline of narrative criticism. This chapter would be an invaluable help to students who need an introduction to this methodology. After a brief history of the rise of narrative criticism, Bauer explains how the "narrative world" relates to the "real world," such that (in his view) the two are not meant to be isolated from one another. Rather, the author of Acts provides readers with an interpretation of real-world events. Although Bauer doesn't elaborate much upon what he means when he says that it is "naïve to think that one can move directly from the presentation of the narrative to events in the real world" (leaving the reader to wonder how reliable Luke's interpretation of these events might be in Bauer's view), the rest of his commentary

regularly refers to historical information about places, customs, events, and people, that are "outside" the information provided by the narrative of Acts alone. Bauer then applies Chapman's distinction between story ("what is told") and discourse ("how it is told") to the narrative of Acts. In terms of the roles of conflict and plot in the unfolding of the story, Bauer sees the main conflict in the opposition against the exalted Christ and the church. Thus, there is "a complex protagonist: Christ *and* his Church" (particularly certain leaders, p. 15). Nevertheless, Bauer then helpfully summarizes the many ways in which "the exalted Lord Jesus Christ is the most significant actor in the narrative of Acts" (pp. 15–17). The rest of this chapter follows the plot according to this conflict, explains "characterization" and various "settings" (temporal, spatial, social), then turns to an explanation of "discourse." Again, the student new to this discipline will find a helpful orientation to terms such as "implied author," "implied reader," "narrator," and "point of view." Along the way, these terms are explained with reference to Acts. The concluding few pages of this chapter offer a summary of various rhetorical devices found in Acts (such as litotes, repetition). There is much helpful orientation here, though some may wish for interaction with criticisms of this methodology (see, e.g., questions concerning the viability of applying notions such as "plot" to historiographical works in Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Fads and Common Sense: Reading Acts in the First Century and Reading Acts Today," *JETS* 54.2 [2011]: 251–78).

Chapter 3 rounds out this orientation to methodology with a discussion of the literary structure of Acts. Bauer argues that the outline provided in Acts 1:8 is the best overall structure for Acts, with a more specific division between 1:1–26; 2:1–8:1a (Jerusalem); 8:1b–12:25 (Judea and Samaria); 13:1–19:20 (Greece); and 19:21–28:31 (Rome). Although the broad outline of 1:8 is recognized by many, Bauer argues that despite the anomalies of locations outside these regions being mentioned in these sections (e.g., Jerusalem; Damascus and Antioch being located outside Judea and Samaria; and the emphasis on Jerusalem and Judea in the final chapters), this outline best explains an "expansion" beyond (rather than a "shift" away from) these areas that is developed throughout the narrative of Acts (pp. 52–53). Bauer helpfully notes how many references there are to "Greeks" or to Greek culture in 13:1–19:20 and how many references there are to "Rome/Roman" in 19:21–28:20. Despite this, some may not be convinced that this is the best way to break up these main developments in the narrative (e.g., the continued focus on Ephesus in Acts 19 despite the parallels with the riot in Acts 21; and the placement of Acts 20 in this framework; the ongoing focus on Israel and the Scriptures in Acts 21–28). Bauer helpfully notes, however, the connections to Isaiah in Acts 1:8 so that the "end of the earth" refers to witness to the Gentiles. This witness is "not simply a reportage of events but also the proclamation of the salvific significance of these events, which, in both Isaiah and Acts, involves the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38–39; 3:19) and the turning from idolatry to the worship of the true God (Acts 14:15–17; 17:24–31; 26:16–18)" (p. 56). Furthermore, because this is both a promise and a command, this opening verse indicates that the expansion of the gospel is "not due to the cleverness, persistence, or capabilities of the agents but rather to the power of the exalted Christ" (p. 56). I couldn't agree more! The rest of this

chapter highlights the many ways in which repetition is found throughout Acts. Although I would like to have seen more interaction with those who view the summary statements as providing structural clues, this whole chapter is a good overview of the main features of the narrative development in Acts.

The remaining three quarters of the book is a commentary on the narrative of Acts from beginning to end. Of course, some will not agree with every exegetical decision in the commentary. For example, concerning the "Jerusalem decree," Bauer asserts that "the implied reader would recognize that these are demands that Moses placed upon strangers, or aliens, who lived among the Hebrews in the land (Lev 17–18)" (pp. 189–90). Although there is a footnote to other views summarized in Barrett's commentary, there is no indication why the implied reader would not see these as prohibitions related to idolatry and idolatrous practices in pagan temples, as Witherington has argued. Minor disagreements aside, the commentary as a whole is a sensible and careful reading of the text (section-by-section rather than a closer verse-by-verse approach of some of the larger commentaries).

The strengths of the commentary are many. Bauer shows the coherence of the narrative, regularly provides insightful supporting evidence from the details of the Greek text in footnotes (with occasional reference to grammars such as Wallace), provides pointers to further discussion in other commentaries and monographs (though this could be described as limited, or more positively, uncluttered), fills out historical details of settings and events (e.g., Athens, the experience of Socrates in Athens, the beliefs of Epicureans and Stoics, pp. 204–5), and provides occasional diagrams to illuminate the flow of argument of a section. In the midst of a regular sprinkling of terms such as "narrator" and "implied reader," the reader of this commentary will find a careful reading of the text with supporting background information. Although there is much to gain from this fine study, in terms of the "literary" emphasis of the commentary, I found myself wishing that there was more interaction with other literary commentaries (e.g., Tannehill and Spencer) along the way. Why did Bauer's "narrative-critical" approach differ from Spencer's structure and development of the narrative? Perhaps some interaction along the way with other "literary" approaches would have helped to highlight the plausibility of Bauer's outline. In this regard, perhaps more specific links within the sections (especially 15:36–19:20) might have also helped to show the development of plot or flow of argument within these sections in addition to the development across Bauer's four main divisions of the book.

Minor disagreements and quibbles aside, and allowing for the limited focus of a specifically "narrative-critical" study, this is an engaging, insightful, careful, commentary on the text of Acts, and a very accessible introduction to narrative criticism.

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Rethinking Galatians: Paul's Vision of Oneness in the Living Christ. By Peter Oakes and Andrew K. Boakye. New Testament Guides. London: T&T Clark, 2021, 205 pp., $26.95 paper.

Peter Oakes and Andrew Boakye, colleagues at the University of Manchester, team up to offer a fresh reading of Galatians that draws on their previous work (Oakes, *Galatians*, Paideia [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015]; Boakye, *Death and Life: Resurrection, Restoration, and Rectification in Paul's Letter to the Galatians* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017]), while pressing beyond these individual contributions to present a unique synthesis that sheds valuable light on many well-worn themes of this letter. The chapters are individually authored, as opposed to co-authored, which allows the voice and perspective of each to be clearly heard. Oakes's primary concern is to foreground themes connected to unity in diversity in Galatians, while Boakye focuses his attention on the scriptural citations of Galatians, perceiving a consistent orientation toward the movement from death to life, reminiscent of Ezekiel and exemplified in Paul's encounter with the resurrected Christ.

Oakes introduces the volume by reframing Galatians to emphasize the "then-current experience" of the recipients. He notes the prominence of the present indicative mood form, the second-person verbal forms, and the identity marker of "Gentile" (in various expressions) in order to foreground the idealized experience of the Galatians that Paul puts forward and expects to shape their lived reality. The result, in Oakes's view, is a reading of Galatians that moves away from an overemphasis on its polemics and controversy and allows the themes of life and unity to emerge with greater clarity.

Chapter 2, also written by Oakes, takes up the much-debated issue of Paul's language of faith in Galatians, particularly *pistis Christou* and related constructions. After a survey of the current state of the question, Oakes tracks the presentation of Christ sequentially through the chapters of Galatians, followed by a similar chronological presentation of the Christological narrative of the letter. Oakes argues that both lines of evidence converge to present a relational Christ; that is, one who is intimately and relationally involved with his people. Oakes continues the recent trend to interpret *pistis* relationally, entailing continuing trust and loyalty (as opposed to a mere past act of belief), and moves away from the subjective genitive reading of *pistis Christou* (faithfulness of Christ), although this is more an undercurrent of the argument of the chapter than a primary emphasis.

Boakye authors chapters 3–5, and here the argument becomes exegetically denser and more technical due to the close reading of the text that is required to demonstrate Boakye's thesis in each chapter. Chapter 3 explores the scriptural citations in Galatians, highlighting Paul's underlying concern to ground the resurrection of the messiah in the Jewish scriptures and so demonstrate that justification is an expression of new life and is linked to the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. In chapter 4, Boakye takes up the themes of death, life, righteousness, and resurrection, arguing that Ezekiel's valley of the dry bones provides the backdrop to these themes in Galatians. To be sure, Paul never actually cites Ezekiel 37 in Galatians, but Boakye believes this chapter provides the metanarrative that best

illuminates the motifs of resurrection and revivification by the Spirit in Galatians. Chapter 5 tackles the "Law and Spirit" in Galatians, particularly Paul's pronouncement that "the Law cannot generate life" (3:21). Boakye argues, as many have, that the Spirit now becomes the moral compass for the believer in the absence of a legal code and provides the necessary new life to follow in obedience (5:25).

Oakes takes the helm again in chapter 6, where he seeks to demonstrate that "the key direction of Paul's letter to the Galatians is towards unity, oneness" (p. 132). After dealing with objections to this approach and then distinguishing his proposal from others that similarly emphasize unity as a theme in Galatians, Oakes proceeds to reread Galatians with this theme in mind, tracing its development, section by section, from chapter 2 through chapter 6. A final summative chapter recapitulates the primary conclusions of the book.

There is much to commend about *Rethinking Galatians*. Each chapter is characterized by careful exegesis that is fully conversant with contemporary scholarship on the issues. I found particularly helpful the way both authors introduced key material with what amounted to a concise history of research on that topic. This allowed them to situate their presentations within the larger body of literature while also highlighting their own unique contributions. They both also offer a stimulating departure from the consensus on important matters, which, even if the reader is not fully convinced, at least engages crucial issues that will compel the thoughtful reader toward a deeper understanding of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Two areas where this reviewer was not fully convinced relate to Oakes's decentering of soteriology as the primary concern in Galatians, and Boakye's peculiar interpretation of Isaac's birth as symbolizing the resurrection of Jesus. Regarding the former, Oakes successfully rereads Galatians to bring out the crucial element of Jew-Gentile unity in Christ and helped this reviewer better appreciate its significance in the argument of the letter. The question remains, however, whether Jew-Gentile unity was Paul's primary concern in writing Galatians or whether it was a necessary implication of Paul's primary concern, the function of the law among Gentile believers. Oakes, for example, believes Paul returned to Jerusalem and presented his gospel before the Jerusalem apostles for the purpose of "seeking unity in diversity" (p. 143). Paul, on the other hand, seems to describe his intent as seeking clarity on the matter of circumcision (2:3), which arose because of "false brothers" who were concerned about the "freedom" being given to Gentiles and who wanted to make them "slaves" (2:4). This sounds strikingly similar to his language concerning freedom/slavery to the law (Gal 4–5; Rom 5–7), which is why he uses this illustration to launch his argument in Galatians. To be sure, unity in Christ is certainly important to Paul (Gal 3:28), as Oakes helpfully elucidates, but the soteriological issue seems foundational—do Gentiles need to add circumcision to faith in Christ to be full members of the family of God?—which will ultimately be decisive for Jew-Gentile unity in Christ.

As noted, Boakye's chapters are tightly argued and require a careful, thoughtful reading to appreciate the many exegetical insights he offers. Amid many incisive observations, however, is a curious line of reasoning that leads Boakye to conclude that "the miraculous birth of Isaac is 'the promise of the Spirit' in Gal. 3:14b" (p.

41), and that "the birth of Isaac [is] a resurrection miracle" (p. 66) and "a type of the resurrection of Jesus" (p. 82); these ideas surface at various points throughout Boakye's chapters. I had a difficult time discerning his rationale for these—to my mind—novel interpretations. Boakye seems to follow a method that allows ideas associated in a text to become equated. For example, Paul refers in Romans 4 to the "deadness" of Abraham's body and Sarah's womb, which ultimately brought forth Isaac. From this Boakye concludes that the birth of Isaac symbolizes resurrection. Of course, Isaac wasn't dead in any sense; it was his parents' age that rendered their bodies (metaphorically) "dead." It seems a bit of a stretch to see Isaac's birth as a kind of resurrection based on this tenuous association. Paul certainly never makes this connection. Similarly, Paul refers in Galatians to the Spirit as "the promised Spirit" (3:14) and Isaac as a son born according to a promise (4:23, 27), and this allows Boakye to conclude, "The promise of the Spirit is a direct reference to the conception and birth of Isaac" (p. 122). Again, such an equation is never made by Paul, who surely had in mind the prophetic promise of the outpouring of the Spirit when he spoke of "the promise of the Spirit" (see Isa 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; Joel 2:28–29).

Peter Oakes and Andrew Boakye have offered students of Galatians an informative and, at times, provocative reading of this letter. Whether you are just getting to know Galatians or are reading it as a seasoned scholar, well familiar with its themes and challenges, *Rethinking Galatians* will have you doing precisely that.

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Letters for the Church: Reading James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude as Canon. By Darian R. Lockett. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021, 232 pp., $30.00.

This book joins a small but growing number of works intended to help readers explore the so-called Catholic Epistles, an often-neglected part of the NT. Especially noteworthy is its methodology. Based on his 2017 monograph, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick), rather than understanding the term "catholic" as referring to a group of letters intended for "general audience," Lockett prefers to take it as a "proper noun" used to identify a "specific collection of New Testament letters" that were incorporated as a whole into the NT canon (pp. 2–5). For this reason, though in the form of a survey of introductory matters and content of the seven NT books named in the title, this volume is also intended to enable readers to "vie(w) (them) together as a coherent witness to early faith in Jesus Christ" (p. 7).

A straightforward layout helps the author successfully accomplish his goal. After a brief introduction to the content and his methodology, six chapters walk the reader through both the exegetical and canonical significance of each letter (2–3 John are treated in one chapter). A final chapter summarizes five important themes that tie these documents together (p. 212). Prefacing each main chapter is a brief exploration of the significance of each letter's canonical location. By operating

within these ancient parameters, Lockett is free to explore relationships between these letters that are often ignored or undervalued in modern biblical scholarship: authorial and literary connections between James and Jude (pp. 9–10), James's parallels with 1 Peter (pp. 51–52), theological connections between 1 and 2 Peter (pp. 123–24), various ways of grouping the Johannine correspondence (pp. 170–71), and the relationship between 1–3 John and Jude (pp. 186–87).

Following these canonical overviews, Lockett explains the exegetical features of each letter by surveying introductory matters, structure, and content. Introductory matters (what he calls "occasion and setting") are further divided into three sections: authorship, audience, and genre, though occasionally he adds other relevant topics as needed. An average of eight pages in length, Lockett's introductions provide focused treatments that avoid excessive discussions of controversial issues. This brevity, however, does not equal superficiality, as he expertly selects relevant internal and external arguments to build his case. At times, some readers might be frustrated by ambiguous solutions to certain matters of introduction. For example, after summarizing arguments for and against Petrine authorship of 2 Peter, he concludes by noting how the freedom of an amanuensis could account for stylistic differences between 1 and 2 Peter "with Peter approving the end product at some point in the process," and Richard Bauckham's theory that, as an example of testamentary literature, early readers would not have been concerned that the Apostle Peter was not the author (pp. 98–101).

Particularly noteworthy in these introductory sections are the helpful, though brief, discussions of genre. With the exception of 2 and 3 John, many of these ancient documents display literary features that warrant special attention such as the paraenesis and wisdom in James (pp. 14–15), the "diaspora letter" attributes of 1 Peter (pp. 56–57), homiletical aspects in 2 Peter (p. 99), the function of 1 John as a "circular letter written for a group of specific communities facing similar issues" (p. 127), and, finally, elements of Jewish exegesis in Jude (p. 191).

Before the expository section of each chapter, Lockett briefly treats structural issues and then provides an outline used for his discussion. The stated goal of these "commentar(ies)" is to "trace the flow of thought of the entire book" to help the reader see "how the theological argument … progresses to its main point" (p. 7). At an average of 25 pages per chapter, Lockett more than achieves his purpose, even allowing himself sufficient room to deal with important exegetical issues impacting interpretation. For example, in the discussion of the "water and the blood" in 1 John 5:6, he devotes a paragraph to explaining relevant contextual issues and arrives at the conclusion this refers to "the water and blood that flowed from Jesus' side at the crucifixion," a picture of his "atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world" (p. 161). While this is certainly sufficient to keep a beginning reader moving through the text, in this case, he follows up with a "going deeper" section to survey "four major" views of this important yet cryptic statement (pp. 162–63). Scattered throughout this volume, these "going deeper" excurses generally provide an extra page of information on more challenging topics and are easy to identify by their grey backgrounds. In addition, each expository section is also punctuated by short sidebars that point readers to the canonical unity of the letters by highlighting

themes common among them. While some themes are unique to each book (e.g., "Diaspora in James and 1 Peter" or "Connections with James" [appearing two times in Jude]), five repeat throughout (e.g., "Faith and Works," "The Love Command") and form the basis of the final chapter. While these thematic insights are helpful for considering their role in this collection of letters, naturally, they will have the most value when the reader places them alongside the broader backdrop of biblical theology.

Finally, both the content and structure of Lockett's volume make it ideal for both academic and practitioner settings. Its shorter length makes it suitable for a basic introduction to these important NT documents. However, Lockett's thorough and knowledgeable survey of background and exegetical issues along with the modeling of a method for considering canonical features of the biblical text makes it a useful resource not only for specialized exegetical courses but for anyone interested in canonical interpretation. Pastors and teachers will also benefit. By reading his comments along with their own study of these letters, they will find quick access into the main ideas and exegetical issues that will assist them with their own learning and preparation.

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Perspectives on Paul: Five Views. Edited by Scot McKnight and B. J. Oropeza. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020, xvi + 285 pp., $29.99.

Perspectives on Paul: Five Views is, as the title suggests, a book in which five authors give their perspectives on Paul, followed by responses from the other four authors. What is different from some other "views" books is that in this book the author is allowed to briefly respond to his respondents. Since the writings of Sanders, Dunn, and Wright are seminal for the various modern perspectives on Paul, the introduction begins with a helpful overview of their ideas, as well as a summary of ideas that tend to be common among New Perspective scholars.

Chapter 1 presents a Roman Catholic perspective on Paul written by Brant Pitre. He argues that Sanders's interpretation of Paul is consistent with Catholic soteriology on several points. For example, Sanders's position on "works of the law" (i.e., as boundary markers) was advocated by some church fathers long before Sanders's time, and even Catholic scholars have disagreed on this issue. Pitre says he is in complete agreement with the Reformation that initial justification is by faith apart from works, but he insists that final judgment is by works. Pitre argues that these good works are actually the good works that Christ does in us.

Chapter 2 presents a traditional Protestant perspective by Andrew Das. According to Das, this perspective focused on three basic claims. First, Second Temple Judaism was a religion of works-righteousness. Second, Paul responded to this by emphasizing God's grace. Third, more specifically, Paul insisted that salvation is by God's grace through faith alone, faith being defined not as faithfulness but as "believing trust." Das admits to finding Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* largely

persuasive, but Das offers a "newer perspective," which sees Paul as arguing that since salvation comes through Christ rather than the Law, Gentiles should not be forced to obey Jewish law for salvation. Das concedes that not all Second Temple Jews believed in a works-righteousness salvation, but he argues that some did. For Das, by "works of the law" Paul referred to any actions that the Law required. Paul's polemic against "works of the law" was not so much against Second Temple Judaism as it was the outcome of his Christological emphasis.

In chapter 3, James Dunn presents his "new perspective on Paul." Dunn argues that Reformation concerns were not first-century concerns. Rather, Paul was writing against those who saw the new Jesus movement as an extension of Judaism and, therefore, insisted that Gentiles in that movement be circumcised and obey Jewish food laws. Dunn argues that in Galatians 2:1–10 Paul was insisting that this issue had been settled and that not even Titus had been compelled to be circumcised. However, when Peter later came to Antioch and refused to eat with Gentiles, Paul felt that James and Peter were going back on what had been agreed upon earlier in Jerusalem. Paul, therefore, insisted that we are justified by faith and not by works of the Law, which, in the context of Galatians, referred primarily to circumcision and dietary laws. Paul argued that requiring anything other than faith for salvation was to rely on one's own righteousness.

In chapter 4, Magnus Zetterholm presents "The Paul within Judaism Perspective." This perspective argues that Paul continued to be a fully observant Jew even after his Damascus experience. Paul's apparently negative statements about the Law must be balanced with Paul's very positive views of the Law in Romans 3:31, 7:7, and 7:12. Zetterholm observes that even within Judaism there was a wide spectrum of belief regarding what constituted true Torah observance. He insists that Paul's negative statements on the Law, his confrontation with Peter in Antioch, and his position on food offered to idols in Corinth, can all be interpreted comfortably within that spectrum. For Zetterholm, Paul was attempting to create a form of Judaism for non-Jews, apart from Torah observance. So while Gentiles could be part of the eschatological consummation without becoming Jewish proselytes, Gentiles could never be part of Israel, Jews did not need to give up their Jewish faith, and nothing requires us to believe that Paul broke with Judaism.

Chapter 5 by John Barclay is about the "gift perspective," a title coined for this book. This perspective focuses on the Paul's idea of gift/grace as the underlying, unifying pattern for all Paul's theology. Barclay believes that it builds on and repairs weaknesses in the debate between old and new perspectives on Paul. The gift perspective focuses on gift, in part, as an explanation for the incongruities in Paul's theology: "resurrection out of death, wisdom in folly, mercy on the disobedient, power in weakness." In the modern Western word, "gift" is usually seen as something given with no strings attached, but, in the ancient world, gifts were intended to create and strengthen social ties, and reciprocity was essential for that purpose. As just one example, Romans 12:1 makes it clear that the gift/mercy of God was intended to bring forth a response. This response is about the transformative work of the Holy Spirit that issues forth in good works. This gift/expectation explains why Paul writes about judgment by works. Failure to respond to God's

gracious gift by the transforming work of the Spirit shows that the gift was never received in the first place (Barclay later retracted that statement in his response to Pitre, clarifying that he should have said, "It is clear that the gift has been received in vain" [p. 254]). The Christ event was the ultimate "incongruous gift" that makes all external identity markers (social, cultural, economic, or ethnic status) irrelevant.

To summarize the responses, all participants agree that Paul's Jewish heritage is important for understanding his message and that he retained some aspects of that heritage even after his experience on the road to Damascus. Participants disagreed, however, with Zetterholm's view that Paul did not break with Judaism in some ways. While contributors agreed that we are saved by grace through faith, they did not agree with Pitre that works were a condition for staying in the faith. Finally, Das and Zetterholm did not see much significant difference between Barclay's "gift perspective" and the traditional perspective.

I was a little puzzled to find that although some contributors alluded to regeneration, none gave it the attention it deserves. It is regeneration, "the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5), that produces progressive sanctification and turns us from darkness to light and from death to life. This change of heart or repentance (Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 7:10; 2 Tim 2:25) produces a hatred of sin and a love for God resulting in Spirit-produced progressive sanctification. Of course, the moment we are regenerated, God also justifies us, declaring us righteous. But that declaration alone does not produce experiential sanctification. If theologians would place the primary emphasis on regeneration, perhaps there could be some movement in the justification/sanctification debate about Paul.

I found *Perspectives on Paul* to be a helpful introduction to the current debate on Paul, especially in its reaction to Sanders. The introduction, containing a concise but excellent overview of the current state of Pauline studies and literature, is almost worth the price of the book. For students new to the debate in Pauline studies, I would recommend first reading *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*, ed. Stanley Gundry and Michael Bird (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). *Four Views* tends to be a more general overview of Pauline thought, whereas *Perspectives* often seemed like a reaction to Sanders.

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Within the Veil: The Ascension of the Son in the Letter to the Hebrews. By Félix H. Cortez. Studies in Jewish and Christian Literature. Dallas: Fontes, 2020, xxiii + 383 pp., $33.95, paper.

In *Within the Veil*, Félix H. Cortez, associate professor of NT at Andrews University, explores the motif of Jesus's ascension in the Epistle to the Hebrews. At the outset of chapter 1, Cortez contends that "Jesus's ascension stands at the foundational core of NT theology" (p. 1). Nonetheless, he notes that the motif of ascension has been ignored or has been given only scant attention. Cortez points out that Hebrews scholars have given much attention to Jesus's sacrifice and ses-

sion rather than to his ascension. To address this gap, Cortez examines "the purpose of Jesus's ascension and its role in the argument of Hebrews" (p. 6). Cortez also points out that scholars contend that Hebrews utilizes the Day of Atonement ritual to delineate Jesus's ascension. However, he contends that the author of Hebrews employs the Day of Atonement ritual in a limited manner. For instance, the "affliction of the soul" and the Azazel ritual are missing in Hebrews, whereas these two are vital in the Day of Atonement ritual. Cortez also critiques those scholars who argue that the inauguration of the covenant has a central role in the discourse of Jesus's ascension rather than the Day of Atonement. Instead, Cortez insists, Hebrews employs both the Day of Atonement and the inauguration of the covenant imagery in the explication of Jesus's ascension.

In chapter 2, Cortez explores the motif of the Davidic Covenant in the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism in order to highlight the utilization of the motif in Hebrews. The discussion of the chapter consists of four major elements. The first element addresses the institution of the Davidic Covenant. David's intention to build a house for God took a different course when God stated that David's son, not David himself, would build God a home and that God would build a home for David. This constitutes the establishment of the unconditional Davidic Covenant. However, if a king disobeys God, that king will receive God's punishment in accordance with the Mosaic law. The Davidic king, Cortez argues, serves as the reformer of the cult. Conversely, "the Davidic [covenant] confirms the Mosaic covenant, but under 'better promises'" (p. 51).

The second element presents the five good kings—Solomon, Asa, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah—who followed in the footsteps of David. These kings carried out covenant renewal, reformed the cult, adhered to the Mosaic law, and attempted to reunify Israel. The third element showcases the motif of the Davidic Covenant in other parts of the Hebrew Bible. The Psalms (2, 18, 72, 89, 110, 132) and the prophets discuss the Davidic Covenant. The Psalms indicate requests made by the Davidic king to secure victory. In contrast, the prophets stress the importance of righteous rule, repentance, the consequence of the people's unfaithfulness, and the delay of the fulfillment of the Davidic promises. The fourth element explicates the notion of the Davidic covenant in early Judaism. During this period, there was a mixed response "to the failure of the Davidic dynasty" (p. 140). Some, like Josephus, renounced the significance of the Davidic Covenant. First Maccabees denotes that there is no future for the covenant. For Sirach, the covenant is replaced by the present priesthood. Others (Qumran, 4 Ezra, and Psalms of Solomon) highlight that "the Davidic Covenant [is] a source of eschatological hope" (p. 141).

Chapter 3 elucidates the motif of Jesus's ascension in some texts of Hebrews. Cortez attempts to tease out the way the texts describe Jesus's ascension and the reason the author mentions the motif in the texts analyzed. Hebrews 1:6 has posed an interpretive conundrum among Hebrews scholars. The expression "when he brings the firstborn into the world" has been understood to mean: "the parousia, the incarnation and the exaltation of Jesus in heaven" (p. 146). Cortez contends that 1:6 is primarily about Jesus's ascension. He understands the term οἰκουμένη to

refer to heaven, not the world (cf. Heb 2:5), expressing God's bringing of his Son into heaven.

Hebrews 4:14–16 is another passage that explicitly mentions the ascension motif. This passage brings to the fore the link between Jesus's sonship, high priesthood, and the need for the audience to persevere. The expressions "high priest" and διέρχομαι are key for Cortez's argument of the ascension motif in this pericope. He also points out that 4:14–16 encapsulates the argument put forth in the subsequent chapters of Hebrews (5:1–10:18) and concludes the argument offered beginning at 3:1. Thus 4:14–16 plays a central role in the argument of Hebrews. Hebrews 6:19–20 highlights Jesus's ascension into the heavenly tabernacle. Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary ahead of the people he represents; hence his entrance provides hope to believers that their salvation is secure.

Hebrews 9:11–14 denotes "Jesus's ascension to heaven as an entrance into the heavenly sanctuary" (p. 258). Here Cortez contends that Jesus's entrance into the sanctuary is a reference to the inauguration of the New Covenant rather than to an eschatological Day of Atonement. In 9:24–26, the author "compares the Day of Atonement" (p. 266). The comparison is utilized to highlight the superiority of the New Covenant and Jesus's sacrifice. Hebrews 9:24 particularly denotes that Jesus appears in heaven before God to remove the taint of sin. Hebrews 10:19–25 reveals the notion that Jesus has paved the way to access God's presence. Hence, the audience is exhorted to approach God. Finally, in order to nudge believers to persevere in the faith, 12:18–29 presents the believers' ascension to heaven because of Jesus's ascension.

Cortez ably proves his thesis that the motif of ascension in Hebrews is not confined to Leviticus 16. Instead, Cortez argues that the enthronement of the Davidic King gives the framework for Jesus's ascension to heaven. While some aspects of his argument slightly challenge the Leviticus 16-only paradigm, Cortez's approach appears to downplay the significance of the Day of Atonement ritual in the argument of Hebrews (especially in 6:19–20 and chapters 8–10). On another note, this volume seems to convey that ascension is the pinnacle of Jesus's high priestly ministry. Hence, Jesus's post-ascension high-priestly ministry—i.e., intercession—has been paid little attention.

Overall, *Within the Veil* is a thorough and detailed study of Jesus's ascension to heaven. As such, the book will be an invaluable resource in furthering the conversation regarding ascension in NT studies, particularly in Hebrews scholarship.

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The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation. Edited by Craig R. Koester. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, xxi + 525 pp., $150.00.

The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation, edited by Craig Koester, is designed to be a standard, single-volume reference work for students and scholars researching John's Apocalypse. This volume brings together thirty-one specialists

for a total of thirty essays dealing with various aspects of the interpretation of Revelation. The volume is introduced by an essay from Craig Koester, editor of the volume, that orients readers to some of the central issues and concerns in the modern interpretation of the book. Although providing a succinct and helpful introduction to trends in interpretation, it does come as a surprise that debates concerning the authorship and date of composition are delayed until later in the volume. The essays that follow the introduction are grouped into five sections and average 16–17 pages in length. Most of the contributors have published monographs or other significant works related to their respective topics, and most chapters succeed in orienting the reader to major voices and developments in the discussion. Each chapter includes an introduction to the area of study, consideration of scholarly trends (including, generally, each respective author's contributions to that area and potential areas of further study), and a bibliography of relevant sources.

The first main section (chaps. 2–8) focuses on "Literary Features of the Book of Revelation." The section begins with a helpful treatment of "The Genre of the Book of Revelation" by Mitchell G. Reddish. Reddish explores the apocalyptic, prophetic, and epistolary elements in John's Apocalypse. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the book's narrative features (James L. Resseguie, "Narrative Features of the Book of Revelation") and imagery (Konrad Huber, "Imagery in the Book of Revelation"), respectively. Next, David DeSilva introduces the rhetorical features in Revelation (chap. 5). Steve Moyise then explores the different issues related to John's use of the OT (chap. 6), and David Mathewson provides a helpful discussion of the features of the Greek language in Revelation (chap. 7). The section concludes with a discussion of the hymns that appear in the book (chap. 8; Justin P. Jeffcoat Schedtler). The essays in this section orient the reader well to these literary features and concerns.

The second major section (chaps. 9–12) deals with the social setting of the book. Warren Carter's chapter ("Revelation and Roman Rule in First-Century Asia Minor") engages issues related to the date of the book and its relationship to Roman authority, including the issue of emperor worship. The following two chapters address the relationship of John and his readers to Jewish communities (Mikael Tellbe, "Relationships among Christ-Believers and Jewish Communities in First-Century Asia Minor") and Gentile religious groups (Richard S. Ascough, "Greco-Roman Religions and the Context of the Book of Revelation") in Asia Minor. The final essay (Paul Trebilco, "John's Apocalypse in Relation to Johannine, Pauline, and Other Forms of Christianity in Asia Minor") explores the relationship with other Christian groups in the region. The assessment in this essay is largely tied to Trebilco's view on the date and circumstances of the Johannine and Pastoral Epistles, and the argument may prove more or less convincing, depending on one's view of his reconstruction.

The third section (chaps. 13–20) addresses topics related to "Theology and Ethics." Topics such as God (chap. 13; Martin Karrer), Jesus (chap. 14; Loren L. Johns), the Spirit (chap. 15; John Christopher Thomas), creation/new creation (chap. 16; Mark B. Stephens), evil (chap. 17; Gregory Stevenson), violence (chap. 18; David L. Barr), Babylon/New Jerusalem (chap. 19; Lynn Huber), and the peo-

ple of God (chap. 20; Peter S. Perry) receive treatment in this section. Issues related to soteriology and eschatology are considered in relationship to these topics, but dedicated chapters on these topics could have been beneficial.

The fourth section (chaps. 21–27) addresses the "History of Reception and Influence." The first two chapters address the textual history (chap. 21; Juan Hernández Jr.) and canonical status (chap. 22; Tobias Nicklas) of the book. The remaining chapters of this section address other aspects of the reception history of the book. While most of the essays in this volume are intended to be read as standalone entries, the remaining essays in this fourth section function best in concert with one another. The chapter on "Reception History and the Interpretation of Revelation" (chap. 23; Ian Boxall) provides the framework for the subsequent chapters that address the patristic period (chap. 24; Charles Hill), the medieval period (chap. 25; Julia Eva Wannenmacher), and the modern period (chap. 27; Joshua T. Searle and Kenneth G. C. Newport). This section also includes consideration of both art (briefly in chap. 23) and music (chap. 26; Paul Westermeyer), both of which are welcome inclusions given the rich history of the impact of John's Apocalypse in those areas.

The final section, "Currents in Interpretation," consists of three essays addressing "Feminist Interpretation of Revelation" (chap. 28; Susan E. Hylen), "Interpreting Revelation through African American Cultural Studies" (chap. 29; Thomas B. Slater), and "Post-Colonial Interpretation of the Book of Revelation" (chap. 30; Harry O. Maier). These essays describe the general approaches taken as well as the differing conclusions reached by interpreters working within these subdisciplines.

Several strengths should be noted for this handbook. The volume succeeds in introducing students and scholars to the state of research in the field, and the bibliographies in each chapter prove quite valuable. Likewise, the concern with the first-century context is a clear strength of this handbook. Many popular modern approaches to Revelation largely ignore any relationship with the first-century world, and the chapters in this volume demonstrate the value of exploring the historical, religious, cultural, and literary context of the first-century world.

The length of entries, although understandable for a volume of this size, at times poses some challenges. For example, the chapter on "Jesus in the Book of Revelation," arguably a central concern in the book, largely focuses on the image of the "Lamb" to the relative exclusion of other major depictions. Given the research of Loren Johns into this image and its importance in the book, the focus is unsurprising (and Johns highlights helpful insights from his previous research), but greater development of other significant images and titles could be helpful.

Given the range of hermeneutical approaches to John's Apocalypse, the volume would have benefited from a chapter surveying major interpretive frameworks. Boxall, in his essay on reception history (chap. 23), introduces this concern (p. 384), and further exploration of these approaches would prove helpful. The "futurist" approach is explored in a subsequent chapter (chap. 27), and attention is largely directed to more fanciful futurist interpretations (more restrained futurist interpretations are noted, though briefly). The interpretation of the millennium, typically a

major issue for evangelical interpreters, receives some focus in the section on the history of reception (it should be noted, however, that the "historic premillennial" view and the "postmillennial" views are identified, incorrectly, as the same viewpoint in the final essay [see footnote 2 on p. 511]).

Overall, the handbook succeeds in providing a helpful set of essays for students and scholars. The essays in the volume are engaging and could be helpful in a seminary-level course on Revelation, but the cost of the volume ($150.00) will likely prove too expensive for use as a textbook. I would echo the hope of a previous *JETS* reviewer (Daniel Gurtner, review of *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint*, edited by A. G. Salveson and T. M. Law, *JETS* 64.4 [2021], 817) that Oxford University Press will release a more cost-effective paperback version. As a resource for libraries (and for researchers), though, this book will prove to be a helpful tool for the study of John's Apocalypse.

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Discovering Revelation: Content, Interpretation, Reception. By David A. DeSilva. Discovering Biblical Texts. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021, 235 pp., $22.00 paper.

There may be as many introductory and interpretive guides for the Book of Revelation as there are interpretations of it. Nevertheless, the nature of Revelation as first-century visionary prophetic literature creates need for an introductory book written by a seasoned scholar to offer a robust, judicious, and balanced guide for approaching John's Apocalypse. To that end, David DeSilva may have produced one of the finest books to introduce both academic and nonacademic audiences to reading Revelation in a responsible, insightful, and meaningful way. DeSilva skillfully condenses a wealth of scholarship on the Book of Revelation in a clear and crisp manner, providing readers with a mature grasp on significant issues.

The strategy and goals of *Discovering Revelation* are primarily hermeneutical to provide readers of Revelation with an informed and sensible approach. DeSilva states, "It will be the aim of this book to lay out the various contributions made to the understanding of Revelation through a variety of approaches" (p. 3). He makes clear, however, that "openness to multiple approaches to interpretation does not conduce to openness to *all* approaches to interpretation" (p. 3). In particular, he argues persuasively how a one-to-one correspondence of many popular futurist interpreters, who look to modern technology and current events, yields flawed interpretations. Rather, DeSilva advocates for an approach informed by the history of interpretation and emphasizes the contemporary-historical realities in late first-century Asia Minor. He posits an interpretative approach of "(1) immersing ourselves as fully as possible into the social, economic, political, religious, and ideological situations of John and his congregations; (2) discovering within those situations what John takes issue with and how he calls Christ-followers to respond; and (3) seeking to understand on what basis he makes those determinations" (p. 194).

DeSilva organized and structured the book with a logical flow that guides the reader first to gain a basis for interpretation and then to overview Revelation's content. The first four chapters cover a range of introductory matters to orient the reader to his hermeneutical method. In the second chapter, "Interpreting Revelation: Strategies for Reading," DeSilva lays out his hermeneutical approach of engaging the "three worlds of the text," which are the world *behind* the text, *within* the text, and *in front of* the text (pp. 12–16). He also discusses the genre of Revelation as letter, prophecy, and apocalypse in a manner thick with hermeneutical theory and analysis of the traditional approaches to Revelation.

Chapters 3 and 4, then, pertain to the world *behind* the text as he first addresses the composition and transmission of Revelation followed by a fantastic chapter fleshing out the historical and social context of John's world. The purpose is "to seek out what correlations might exist between these images in his vision and features of the landscape" of the lived reality of the original audience to better discern how Revelation "interpreted the world for those first hearers" (p. 54). Chapters 5–11 comprise his reading of Revelation 1–22, which is the world *within* the text. Each chapter summarizes and interprets the content of Revelation with attention to specific passages considering various interpretive debates, the history of interpretation, the socio-historical background, and the theological contributions of the text. The book concludes in chapter 12 by offering suggestions on interpreting Revelation for today's audience—the world *in front of* the text.

Out of the dozens of introductory books on Revelation I have read, *Discovering Revelation* stands out as one of the overall best for its readability, clarity of thought, engagement with scholarship, and hermeneutical consistency.

The greatest strength of DeSilva's contemporary historical approach to Revelation is the way he prioritizes the meaning of the message as rooted in its first-century context to prompt its audience to perceive their situation and act as Christ-followers while living against the grain of Roman imperialism and religion. He writes, "As an unveiling of the larger canvas of divine and demonic activity and agendas, and as an unveiling of what the audience's lived landscape looked like against the backdrop of that canvas, Revelation might be better approached *as* the key that John offered his congregations to unlock the meaning and significance of their present moment and situation, potentially challenging and changing their own views of and responses to elements of that situation" (p. 26). This approach provides a more text-centered and contextual reading of Revelation that avoids the pitfalls of an over-realized eschatology and the anachronistic tendencies of looking for one-to-one correspondences to modern technology and circumstances. Modern readers, then, may find the significances of passages concerning visions of the future "in the perspective they bring to the present moment and situation" (p. 26) in order to respond in a corresponding manner to the message of Revelation.

Another feature of *Discovering Revelation* is the steady reference to the history of interpretation when examining passages in Revelation. DeSilva examines certain passages with an eye toward interpretations from the early period (e.g., Victorinus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Tyconius), the Middle Ages (e.g, Nicholas of Lyra, Joachim of Fiore, Oecumenius, Bede), the Reformation era (e.g., Martin Luther et al.), and a

wide range of modern interpreters. By integrating the history of interpretation, especially regarding certain challenging passages (e.g., the four horsemen, the woman and the dragon, the mark of the beast, etc.), DeSilva provides a more fully orbed perspective for adjudicating how and why these passages were understood.

Discovering Revelation may not advance any particularly new interpretations, but its greatest contributions are its very well-developed hermeneutical approach; its thorough contextual presentation of the historical, social, political, and religious world of Revelation; and its consistent, cohesive, and balanced articulation of the content of Revelation. Despite my overall praise for the book there were a few areas that could be improved. The most obvious was some repetitious overlap between the economic background in chapter 3 and the economic critique of Babylon in chapter 10. Although it was in keeping with reading the text in a contextually robust manner, it may have been possible simply to refer back to the early chapter. There are also a few challenging passages where various interpretations were presented, but the author's preferred interpretation was not explicit. On one hand, this allows readers to form their own conclusions, but on the other it may leave a reader unclear and wanting a more pronounced nuanced interpretation. Lastly, I think the book could have benefited from photos and illustrations to enhance the references to some of the historical artifacts. Aside from these very minor critiques, *Discovering Revelation* is outstanding, and it is the new gold standard for an introduction and guide for reading John's Apocalypse.

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Early North African Christianity: Turning Points in the Development of the Church. By David L. Eastman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021, xiv + 174 pp., $22.99 paper.

David L. Eastman in *Early North African Christianity* (2021) provides an excellent survey of the impact of North African Christianity on patristic thought and contemporary theological discussions. While the figures of Latin North Africa are known in the academy, popular Christianity is largely ignorant of their contributions, with perhaps the exception of Augustine. Eastman writes with this audience in mind, thus producing a work more favorable towards popular readership than the comparable work *Ancient African Christianity* by David Wilhite (London: Routledge, 2017), which gives a more thorough survey of the same material. Eastman drafted his book from lecture notes that he wrote for a class he taught in 2014 and 2015 at the Center for Early African Christianity in Cairo, Egypt. The book thus is more of a survey of the major figures than an attempt to make major progress in the technical literature. Be this as it may, Eastman hopes that the information will help scholars, pastors, and laypeople who have not studied patristic Latin in a formal academic setting. His thorough study and summarization of the primary documents allows him to accomplish this purpose, even if the work has a few weaknesses that makes it less useful for scholars. To demonstrate Eastman's overall success, this review will first give the outline of the book's content, with

notes on some particularly strong and weak moments, then will provide a brief overview of overarching strengths and weaknesses.

Chapter 1 serves the pivotal role of introducing readers to Roman Africa, which differed from modern Africa. This chapter may be Eastman's strongest. He names the regions and important cities of North Africa and points out the economic importance of that land. He provides a very clear and thorough description of Roman Africa, comparable to the one given by James S. Jeffers in *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999).

Eastman's first of five major sections is on Perpetua and Felicity. After discussing their lives and times in chapter 2, he presents them as models of Christian devotion for modern Christians in the third chapter. He ends the section in chapter 4 by arguing that this early martyrdom text came out of the Montanist community. The strength of this section is in the first two chapters, where Eastman lays out the reasons Christians were persecuted in the first few centuries. The Romans did not care if Christians worshiped Jesus as God, but they believed the Christians endangered the Empire when they refused to throw incense on the altars of the state gods. Eastman further clarifies that the Romans did not understand the relational aspect between God and the church because, for the Romans, religion was transactional. The next chapter similarly argues that *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* highlighted the reversal in the family made by Christianity. Instead of obeying her *paterfamilias* like a good Roman, Perpetua decided instead not to renounce Christ and thus to be martyred. These chapters explain the paradigm shift Christianity made in how people viewed religion within the Roman Empire.

Eastman's fourth chapter on Perpetua as a Montanist has strengths but also weaknesses. As with his previous chapters, Eastman describes the history and beliefs of Montanism well. The first part of this chapter is an excellent resource for anyone wanting a quick review of this group, even though Eastman does not delve into the differences between Montanism in Asia Minor versus North Africa. The greatest weakness in the chapter comes when he tries to present the *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* as Montanist literature. He argues well that the Holy Spirit is more prominent in the story than Scripture. However, his presentation has two weaknesses. First, he ignores counterarguments. Second, he makes a leap in logic to argue that Perpetua was elevated above the bishop because of her visions; the honor that she received could have come from her position as a confessor rather than her charismata. Confessors were Christians who were imprisoned for Christ. Writing only fifty years after the death of Perpetua, Cyprian of Carthage (bishop 248–258) had to contend against the belief that confessors had authority over bishops (*Ep.* 8–10, 16–17). Eastman thus fails to prove that the authority came from the charismata and not the confession. Despite ending on a relatively weak argument, Eastman provides an overall helpful survey of Perpetua and Montanism.

After covering Perpetua and Felicity, Eastman looks at the three greatest theologians of Latin North Africa, starting with Tertullian in chapters 5–7. The first of these chapters is an excellent survey of the life of Tertullian (155/160–220). Eastman argues alongside Wilhite that Tertullian intentionally distanced himself from Rome, though Wilhite provides a more thorough and better case for this position.

Throughout this section, Eastman also sprinkles in arguments for his understanding that Tertullian had a legal background, making this section a great resource for anyone wanting a summary of that position. The greatest strength of this section comes when Eastman explains Tertullian's description of the Trinity. Eastman argues well that Tertullian drew from legal language. A *persona* was a legal unit that could own property, and *substantia* was something that could be owned. Thus, the Trinity were three *personae* who co-owned one *substantia*. With these terms carrying such theological weight after centuries of use, this section helpfully clarifies what Tertullian meant by them.

The only significant weakness comes in the final chapter of this section when Eastman attempts to explain why Tertullian's voice was largely lost in the church. According to Eastman, most Greek theologians did not read Tertullian because he wrote in Latin, and he was overshadowed in the West by Augustine of Hippo (bishop 395–430). While true, the Latin church also disowned him for his Montanism. Cyprian wrote prior to Augustine and clearly drew from Tertullian, but he never mentioned Tertullian once in his writings. Thus, a stigma quickly became attached to Tertullian due to his turn to Montanism.

After covering Tertullian, Eastman shifts to Cyprian (bishop of Carthage, 248–258). After describing the state of the Roman Empire during the mid-third century, Eastman covers the *lapsi* and rebaptism controversies that spun out of the Decian persecution (250–251). In chapter 8 he provides an excellent summary of the economic, social, and military turmoil that formed Cyprian's context. Likewise, Eastman uses illustrations in his ninth chapter to help readers imagine themselves as members of the Carthaginian church and place themselves in Cyprian's shoes. These chapters helpfully underscore the pastoral dilemmas and the various types of governmental persecution that Cyprian faced during his short time as bishop.

While providing an admirable summary overall, this section also has two notable weaknesses. Eastman oversimplifies the problem of whether the church should be viewed as a clean room or as a hospital. Cyprian at times used medical language to describe salvation, likening sin to a disease, and many of his opponents were laxists simply because it was the easier route to take, as Eastman himself notes at the beginning of chapter 10. The second weakness occurs in chapter 10, where Eastman correctly distinguishes between heretics and schismatics and rightly notes how vitriolic the argument became between Cyprian and Stephen (bishop of Rome, 254–257). However, Eastman summarizes Cyprian's rejection of baptism performed by schismatic bishops as dealing with the individual purity of the bishops. To the contrary, Abraham Van der Beek has recently contended that scholarship has relied too much upon Augustine when interpreting Cyprian on this matter. For Cyprian, schismatic bishops were disqualified from administering baptisms not primarily because of individual impurity but because they were performing the ritual outside the church. The validity of baptisms came from their performance by bishops within the one true church because the presence of the Holy Spirit resided only within that one church. Despite these two weaknesses, Eastman supplies an excellent summary on Cyprian's life and legacy.

Before turning to Augustine as his final figure, Eastman discusses the Donatist Schism (311), which occurred between Cyprian and the bishop of Hippo. Chapter 11 describes the context and causation behind the great persecution under Diocletian, Galerius, and Maximinus (299–311), and chapter 12 does the same with the Donatist Schism. In the latter chapter, Eastman follows Wilhite in emphasizing that most believers in Latin North Africa were Donatists and that the opposing party was largely limited to the Romanized cities on the Mediterranean coast. Like Wilhite, Eastman also labels the anti-Donatists as Caecilianists rather than as Catholics. Eastman argues well that both groups called themselves "Catholics," so giving that label only to Augustine and his camp is anachronistic. In chapter 13, Eastman progresses scholarship by pointing out the many similarities between the *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs* and the life and writings of Paul. Eastman also describes well the Donatist claim to the martyrs, as well as the attack against Donatists that came from Optatus of Milevus and Augustine.

Eastman climaxes his survey of Latin North Africa by looking at Augustine (354–430), fittingly giving him the culminating position. At the same time, Eastman emphasizes correctly that Augustine must be understood within his own context and the Latin North African tradition that he inherited from the figures and events previously presented in the book. Eastman provides a more comprehensive story of Augustine's life than can be found in the *Confessions*, but does not attempt to advance scholarship in this regard. Likewise, Eastman only surveys Augustine's major thought on original sin, the Trinity, and eschatology. Brevity prevents Eastman from making a significant contribution and even forces him into oversimplifying at times. On original sin, Eastman wrongly claims that Baptists deny the doctrine, and he incorrectly implies that they baptize for the remission of original sin. As for the doctrine of the Trinity, Eastman merely explains Augustine's metaphor of love. Likewise, Eastman does not compare Augustine's view of Rome to the vision of it proposed by Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–339). Chapter 16 functions as a better summary since it covers only Augustine's fight against Pelagianism. At first, Eastman unhelpfully defines grace under Pelagianism as a push, an idea that is more in line with Arminianism or perhaps Semi-Pelagianism. However, Eastman defines Pelagianism more accurately later in the chapter and correctly indicates that no Christian denomination in the modern era holds to pure Pelagianism. Eastman's final chapter is good, but his section on Augustine is his weakest one overall. Unlike his treatment of the previous figures, Eastman attempts to discuss more than just two topics, which leads to more oversimplification in this section than in the previous ones, making it less useful.

Overall, the book has several strengths. Eastman takes a sympathetic rather than a critical approach to studying history, and he correctly maintains that Christians should use such a methodology, especially when studying church history. Similarly, he shows what early groups like the Montanists, Modalists, Dontatists, and Pelagians believed; he further stresses that no Christian denomination follows these systems in the modern era. He thus emphasizes charity between Christians and denounces the use of such terms as slurs to belittle other groups, rightly calling such an act both "inaccurate and unhelpful" (p. 166). Eastman also argues against

extreme positions found in both scholarly and popular literature. For example, he contends against the popular view of early Christianity as constantly and universally persecuted as well as against the view of Candida Moss in *The Myth of Persecution* (2014) that the Constantinian church either exaggerated or created the martyrdom stories of the early church. In contrast to both extremes, Eastman rightly claims that severe persecution of the church was limited to specific geographic areas and waxed and waned across the first three centuries. Along the lines of arguing against extremes, Eastman highlights how either idolizing or demonizing the past blurs the truth and proves unhelpful for the present. Finally, Eastman's illustrations allow readers to visualize the problems faced by patristic leaders. He has mastered the ability of giving a great deal of information in a short amount of space. Scholars can use this book as a reference for detailed summaries of the life, literature, and legacy of these figures without wading through dozens of pages to find that information in other books.

Despite these strengths, the work has two overarching weaknesses. While Eastman goes into detail at times, at other moments he oversimplifies because of his need for brevity. This oversimplification sometimes leads him to argue against a straw man. Eastman argues well against Moss in chapter 1 and is clearly aware of her work. Nevertheless, he does not argue against her but rather against an unnamed opponent, envisioning his adversary as someone on the internet. Therefore, at times the book contended against the amateur blogger rather than the professional scholar. Second, Eastman provides no footnotes nor endnotes with secondary scholarship for any of his claims, nor does he even reference other scholars by name except to give credit a few times for illustrations. The book does not have a bibliography, only a section for further reading. While Eastman is clearly well read in the secondary literature, the lack of citations and references allowed for straw man arguments and makes the work much less useful for any scholar who wants to build on Eastman's ideas.

Eastman's thorough knowledge of the life and writings of early Latin figures allows him to accomplish his goal of providing an excellent summary of their thought and importance for both the patristic period and for contemporary readers. Eastman did not write this work primarily for patristic scholars but for others who can benefit from learning from the early fathers. In this way, Eastman's book aligns well with literature such as Michael A. G. Haykin, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011). Eastman's work can supplement a survey-level course on church history. The book will help Eastman's primary audience of pastors and laypeople most of all; any person who wants to learn more about Latin North Africa without having to wade through the waters of technical scholarship will find this book both helpful and enjoyable.

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Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology. By Fred Sanders. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021, vii + 221 pp., $24.77 paper.

Fred Sanders is professor of theology at Biola University's Torrey Honors College. *Fountain of Salvation: Trinity and Soteriology* is the latest addition to his growing publishing footprint, which includes *The Deep Things of God*, *The Triune God*, and numerous articles, book chapters, and theological comic books. In this book, Sanders explores the relationship and connections between the Trinity and the doctrine of salvation. He argues that God reveals his immanent, internal life in his salvific action. The book also sounds an alarm for contemporary evangelical theology about the dangers of distorting a proper understanding of soteriology. A doctrine of the Trinity divorced from any significant connection to human salvation can become meaningless, arid, and disfigured. Conversely, a doctrine of salvation treated in isolation from the Trinity can become detached from the immanent and eternal God and devolve into dealing with him only on the level of historical interpretation and experience. Sanders's goal in *Fountain of Salvation* is to present an approach to the mega-doctrines of the Trinity and soteriology that moves in the arena of a "Goldilocks zone" where values, relationships, and expositions are mutually advantageous and "just right."

From the opening chapter Sanders interweaves two major themes that work in tandem. The first—the doctrine of the Trinity—encompasses all of who God is and what God does. Sanders creatively introduces this theme through a discussion of the art on a "portable altar" designed by Eilbertus of Cologne (ca. 1160). Photos of the altar are provided on pages 11–12. The lid of the altar is analyzed thematically to demonstrate the all-encompassing nature of the doctrine of the Trinity. The left side of the lid tells the story of the crucifixion in sequential pictures while the right follows the story of the resurrection, all in full color, with the activity of the Father, Son, and Spirit in concert throughout. This elegant portrait in pictures—accompanied by Sanders's own commentary—sets the tone for *Fountain of Salvation.* It offers a running and balanced storyline depicting the unity of essence and distinction of persons in the doctrine of the Trinity. The second theme Sanders traces in the Eilbertus altar is the gospel. The visual depiction of the incarnation of the Son, the blood of Christ spilled for human sin, and the resurrection by the Spirit, all combine to display the atonement in a pictorial story. Sanders sees the theology resident in this altar as displaying a theme that runs through many of his previous publications—particularly *The Deep Things of God*—that the doctrine of the Trinity and the gospel belong together.

Throughout *Fountain of Salvation*, Sanders strikes the theme of a balanced view of God who is both a unity of divine essence and a distinction of persons. Balance is essential, according to Sanders, due to the vast nature of Trinitarian doctrine that encompasses so many other fields of theology proper. He offers two simple diagrams. The first shows the danger of misinterpreting the activity of the Trinity in the economy with respect to its efficacy for disclosing the immanent life of God as either "nothing" or "everything." On the side of nothing, the divine persons become relations of authority; on the side of everything, an eternal cross with a suf-

fering deity results. The balanced interpretation highlights an immanent life of God with one essence and distinction of persons by relations of origin. The second diagram is an axis constructed of a horizontal line intersecting a vertical line, creating a matrix with four quadrants. The horizontal line delineates God's immanent life above and economic life below. The vertical line creates a visual separation between the Son on the left and the Holy Spirit on the right. This simple diagram opens the way for discussing "the personal identity of the Son and the Holy Spirit at either end of the immanent-economic axis" (p. 29). Sanders returns to this matrix throughout the book as a guideline for understanding the immanent life of God by the way he reveals himself in the economy. The disciplines of Christology and pneumatology exist inside the doctrine of the Trinity, and the matrix Sanders provides in chapter 1 acts as a map to help us comprehend a sound relationship—with balanced interpretation—of the immanent life of God through the economy of salvation.

Fountain of Salvation consists of ten chapters with an introduction, acknowledgements, a select bibliography, and indices of authors and subjects. The book is not divided into "parts" or "sections," and each chapter can be read as a standalone treatment of the topics it addresses. The ten chapters are organized so that the work flows organically and systematically. Sanders begins by dealing with the theme of revelation, moving to the unity of essence, followed by the distinction of the persons, and closing with application and historical interpretive developments. While every chapter is important to Sanders's discussion, there is a clear logical progression in the development of the book. In chapters 1 and 2, Sanders outlines the revealed doctrine of the Trinity in the economy and the importance of how it reflects and illuminates the immanent life of God. "Trinitarian theology's task," Sanders observes, "is always to speak rightly about God in himself on the basis of what God has made known to us in the history of his works and words for us in salvation" (p. 53). God is known by the information he chooses to reveal, and the purpose of doctrinal discourse is to trace the activity of God as revealed in the economy with respect to his immanent life. God is identified by the gospel. The Father sends the Son and the Holy Spirit through a carefully managed plan dedicated to salvation. The apostle Paul points to the disclosure of this plan when he uses the word οἰκονομία to describe the management and parceling out of salvation (Eph 1:9–10). According to Sanders, the "task of the doctrine of the Trinity is to describe the connection between God and the economy of salvation" (p. 33). The framework of this connection begins with one God (*De Deo Uno*) followed by the triune God (*De Deo Trino*). The single divine essence leads to the relational distinction of the persons that allows for the interpretation of other major theological doctrines such as Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, and revelation. In the first two chapters, Sanders critically interacts with seminal theologians such as Karl Barth, Robert Jenson, John Webster, and Karl Rahner.

Chapters 3–5 present doctrines that exemplify the unity of the one shared essence (*homoousios*) of the Trinity: atonement, ecclesiology, and the Trinity in the Christian life. The thread running through these three chapters focuses on the operation of God in one divine essence. In each of these three areas, Sanders empha-

sizes two important points. The first is the danger of interpreting the doctrines either too closely to the immanent life of God or too far away. These tendencies can be seen in many depictions of the doctrine of atonement. If the atonement runs "too close," or "inside" the doctrine of the Trinity, the result is a suffering deity (Moltmann). If Trinity doctrine is held entirely in the economy, overemphasis is placed on the divine missions and the integrity of God's own life can be lost to an economic material function. The "synthetic nature of the doctrine of atonement" is "comprised of the doctrines of the Trinity, divine attributes, Christology, hamartiology and eschatology" (p. 56). The active atoning work in the world offers information for understanding the immanent triune life of God.

The second insight Sanders emphasizes in these chapters is the way in which a particular doctrine of the Trinity is profitably paired with a determinate sort of salvation. The process of salvation from sin involves God himself, and for us to know and understand God in a determinate way, we need Nicene Trinitarian doctrine. According to the creedal witness of Nicaea, the immanent life of God includes one divine essence in relational distinction as Father, Son, and Spirit. Going to this depth alone can effectively allow for the actual absolution of sin. It further allows us subsequently to know God by his free activity in the world, exemplified in the way he gathers the church. "Broadly, the trinitarian deduction of ecclesiology," notes Sanders, "requires an account of divine action that begins with the divine life itself and then moves outward to God's free actions by way of a processions-missions structure" (p. 73). The immanent life of God is known by his free self-communicating activity, which we understand as the doctrine of the church (John Webster). The saving and gathering activity in the world *opera Dei exeuntia* (the works of God) originates in the immanent perfections of God's life.

The next two chapters focus on the distinction of persons—the Son and the Holy Spirit. Chapter 6 discusses the importance of the eternal generation of the Son (*filiation*) in the act of salvation; chapter 7 follows with the eternal procession of the Spirit (*spiration*) as a necessary complement in salvation. Soteriology's "posterior appeal" is the foundation that Sanders uses to support eternal generation and procession. On the basis of what we now know, we can reason back to the Trinity (Thomas Aquinas). The second person of the Trinity is from the first person of the Trinity—known by God's saving work in the world *and* his self-witness in Scripture. The procession of the Spirit is brought together with the Son through Paul's explanation: "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son" and "sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:4–6). The establishment of the eternal procession of the Spirit submits to the same logic as the eternal generation of the Son. In each case this form of Christology or pneumatology advocates understanding the immanent life of the Trinity by distinct acts of the persons. God has life in himself (*a se*). The missions reflect eternal processions, resulting in the salvation of the lost.

In chapter 8, Sanders underscores the vastness of the doctrine of the Trinity. Three times he puts the matter bluntly: "The doctrine of the Trinity," he reiterates, "is big" (pp. 129, 134, 151). While it may seem odd to place a strong application chapter prior to the closing of a book, it is here that he offers discussion of this

doctrine's interaction with human living, ministry, and theological education. The full doctrine of the Trinity is intuitively on display in Irenaeus's "two-handed theology," which teaches that when the influence of the Son and Spirit are experienced, the connection to the Father exists as well. The Son and Spirit are on divine mission to the world, "and it is equally remarkable how much the Father's presence and power are discernable in the work of his two emissaries, because to be in the grip of Christ and the Spirit is to belong to God the Father" (p. 138). By recognizing essential unity and distinguishing the diverse divine action of the three persons, the inseparability of divine operations is affirmed. Sanders promotes "essential divine unity" over mutual indwelling (*perichoretic unity*). Father, Son, and Spirit are in unity through one single divine essence shared equally by the three. The essential unity of divine action draws worship of God in human activity that honors God; the pursuit of theological education is an example. Gospel ministry is initiated from the Father, effected through the Son, and perfected in the Spirit, who conforms the believer to the image of the Son in two-handed action.

Fountain of Salvation closes with two chapters surveying the development of Trinitarian views over the course of history. Primary emphasis is placed on the effect of Enlightenment rationalism to the present day with special attention given to the impact of Hegel. The influence of Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert Jenson, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Catherine Mowery LaCugna, Elizabeth Johnson, and others in this period are placed under the critical lens of classic orthodox theology.

Sanders continually reinforces the importance of doctrinal support running in step with Scripture to successfully understand the truth of God's immanent life. Athanasius believed in the Trinity because it is biblical, and our belief in this doctrine needs to be for the same reason. Sanders reinforces the biblical grounding for the Trinity with intuitive, convincing use of Scripture, and provides helpful interpretive work in the original biblical languages and the Latin church fathers. The eternal generation of the Son is supported by Matthew 11:27, John 1:18, and 1 Corinthians 2:11, and the eternal procession of the Spirit through interaction with John 15:26. Support from the biblical canon is readily available for all the major positions this book endorses.

Fountain of Salvation contains extensive interaction with major patristic voices and scholars from the modern era to the present day. The positions endorsed find connection, agreement, and disagreement, with charitable summaries provided, for Jenson, Barth, Webster, Moltmann, Karl Rahner, William Burt Pope, and others. Sanders's interaction with Reformed scholastic theologians Petrus van Mastricht and Francis Turretin is particularly helpful, and conversations with the monumental figures of Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus, along with the creedal witness of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), provide valuable context.

Understanding and knowing the God of the evangelical church is the starting point of healthy ministry. For this reason, the content of *Fountain of Salvation* is critical to current ministry practice and helpful for orienting the church with respect to current ministry challenges. Knowing and understanding the unbounded grace that connects humanity to the Father by the mission of the Son and Spirit can change

lives. Ministry leaders in the areas of soul care and counseling, and those supporting the homeless and addicted, need to understand the triune God they serve if they are going to build impactful ministries. *Fountain of Salvation* is a resource for supporting multi-level ministry leadership. One area that could be further explored is the many implications for concrete ministry settings that follow from the insights offered in this book.

Fred Sanders has provided a provocative and informative inroad for individual and formal coursework in understanding the all-encompassing nature of the doctrine of the Trinity. His writing style, constructive presentations, and carefully crafted language promote accessibility of this volume to anyone with some experience in current study of the Trinity. Sanders has provided an insightful, balanced, carefully reasoned, and expertly articulated addition to Trinitarian theology that will surely become an essential part of our contemporary understanding and discussion.

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