

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Divine Father: Religious and Philosophical Concepts of Divine Parenthood in Antiquity* edited by Felix Albrecht and Reinhard Feldmeier. Themes in Biblical Narrative 18. Leiden: Brill, 2014. 433 pp., US \$180.00, hardcover.

This book constitutes volume 18 in the series Themes in Biblical Narrative. As most of the other volumes in this series, the articles were first presented at a European conference devoted to the reception history of a key biblical topic, theme, or character. The individual studies are consistently of a very high scholarly standard. It should be noted, however, that more than a third of the 17 articles are written in German (in contrast to the preceding volumes, which featured maximum two non-English articles). While this is unlikely to constitute a major problem for the intended academic audience, it nevertheless reduces the accessibility for some students and/or scholars.

The articles are all focused on the concept of God as Father, yet they interact with a wide range of primary texts. After a helpful introduction, the volume falls into four natural sections. The first part is devoted to the concept of God in ancient Egypt and ancient Greece, looking both at the cult and at their narrative and philosophical texts. Alexandra von Lieven highlights the dual significance of divine parenthood in Egypt. Not only are the deities understood as parents of the world in the sense that a divine sexual act generated the cosmos but also in their continuous care for the people and animals of Egypt. Turning to Greece, Heinz-Günter Nesselrath argues that the notion of Zeus's fatherhood in Homer's writing is "patriarchal" in the sense that it serves to emphasize his duties toward his creation as head of the family. The third article by Franco Ferrari explores the reception of Plato's writing, with focus on the understanding of *Timaeus* 28c3–5 and its statement about the difficulty to make known to all people the creator and father of the world. The second part explores the notion of God's fatherhood in ancient Judaism. In the sole article devoted to the Hebrew Bible, Hermann Spieckermann argues that preexilic royal theology adopted the language of divine fatherhood from Egyptian royal ideology. Later, post-exilic laments cemented this tradition and emphasized God's discipline and paternal care for his people. The other five articles in this section each analyze a particular early Jewish text: Jacques van Ruiten looks at

Jubilees, Lutz Doering explores the material from Qumran, Robert Hayward discusses the Pentateuchal Targumim, Beatrice Wyss studies the writings of Philo, and Mladen Popović analyses the writings of Josephus. Each article highlights how the text under investigation portrays God as father. The metaphor of the father-son relationship between God and Israel found in Jubilees emphasizes God's love for and election of Israel. Select material from Qumran speaks of God's parental guidance and forgiveness of Israel. The Pentateuchal Targumim speak of God's fatherhood to a higher degree than the parallel texts in the Hebrew Bible. Philo goes even further and employs the metaphorical father-child relationship at great length and variety in his allegorical writing. Josephus speaks of God as the father not only of the Jewish people but also in a more universalistic manner as the father and origin of all, thus betraying not only Greek but also Roman influence.

The six articles in the third section all look at the NT where the notion of God's fatherhood reaches its climax. Florian Wilk investigates the significance of the address to God as "Father" in three of Jesus's prayers (Mark 14:32–34; Matt 11:25ff // Luke 10:21–22; and Matt 6:9–13 // Luke 11:2–4). In each, Jesus expresses trust in God's loving care yet also asking him to be like a father. Ross Wagner, turning to Paul's writing in Galatians, argues that Paul remains particularistic in his discourse of God, the Father of all things. Reinhard Feldmeier highlights how the notion of God's fatherhood gradually gained significance, from its small beginnings in the Hebrew Bible, via an increase in the Gospels, to its culmination in the Epistles (Romans, Galatians, the hymn about Christ in Philippians). Felix Albrecht explores the ways in which 2 Cor 6:16–18 draws on different traditions in the Hebrew Bible and how the idea of God as a Father combines God's promises to the community with his promised to each individual follower of Jesus. George H. van Kooten traces the origin of the epithet "Father of all" in Eph 3:14–15 and 4:6 to the Greek writings of Homer and Hesiod, as well to its application by the Greek philosophers Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and Plato. He further argues that the statements in Ephesians constituted polemics against contemporaneous Greek philosophical ideas. Finally, Jane Heath investigates how the metaphor of God's fatherhood is nuanced when understood in relation, not only to other sets of parents who are referred to in the NT, but also the often ambiguous language of "fathers" in the Hebrew Bible. In particular, she highlights how many texts in the NT polarize *God* as father against *Abraham* as father.

The concluding part returns to ancient Greece, looking at the idea of God's fatherhood in Greek texts from the Late Antiquity. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta explores the concept of God's fatherhood as portrayed by the *Gospel of Truth*, a Gnostic texts preserved among the texts from

Nag Hammadi. He detects two traits in this depiction. Although God the Father is portrayed as remote and transcendent, he has also been accessible and active in history. Finally, Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler investigates the language of the divine father in the writings of two Neo-Platonists: Plotinus and Porphyry. While Plotinus uses the father metaphor to describe the chronological relationship between the hypostases, Porphyry employs the same metaphor when seeking to depict the relationship between the individual soul and the highest deity.

This book is not an easy read and all readers will not be interested in all articles. Yet it is ultimately a very useful volume for those scholars who wish to gain an in-depth understanding of the backgrounds, meanings, and uses of the metaphor of divine fatherhood in the Bible and in other texts from Antiquity.

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*Text, Time, and Temple: Literary, Historical and Ritual Studies in Leviticus* edited by Francis Landy, Leigh M. Trevaskis and Bryan D. Bibb. Hebrew Bible Monographs 64. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015. xx + 239 pp., US \$95.00, hardcover.

The state of flux in scholarship is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Pentateuchal studies—and, arguably, in the study of Leviticus in particular. *Text, Time, and Temple* presents an anthology of critical studies in Leviticus that, aside from the individual contributions, serves as a glimpse into the variety of current approaches being utilized in biblical studies.

In the first chapter Bryan D. Bibb offers a brief overview of the history of scholarship on Leviticus, noting that the twentieth century's two major themes were the dating of the Priestly source (P) and Mary Douglas's influential application of anthropological models to the study of biblical ritual. Bibb then focuses upon the trends of the past decades, his digest covering the significant impact of Jacob Milgrom, along with that of others who have worked in his wake. This entry into Leviticus studies situates the volume's essays, which are summarized in a final section.

Michael Hundley's essay in the second chapter interacts with the work of Benjamin Sommer whose book, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), explores the ancient Near Eastern perception of divinity as possessing fluidity,

capable of having more than one body and so being fully present in different locales. Hundley contrasts the view of YHWH's tabernacle presence, whereby the static cult statue is replaced by the divine glory (and its images of fire and cloud), revealing *and* veiling YHWH's transcendent presence.

In chapter three Jonathan Burnside considers the place of necromancy within the literary structure of Lev 20, arguing that the chapter is well-integrated and cohesive. While the necromancy references (Lev 20:6, 27) have commonly been considered later emendations, disconnected from their context, Burnside urges their logical placement within the text's internal Decalogue structure by appealing to the relationship between necromancy and idolatry, dishonouring parents, and adultery.

Israel Knohl examines the parallels between Israel's cultic rituals and those of northern Syria and southern Anatolia in chapter four. Assuming a genetic connection, he speculates that early Semitic inhabitants of the northern region had mingled with Hittite and Syrian populations before Assyrian aggression caused them to flee south into Canaan, their ritual heritage subsequently encoded in the Priestly texts.

The question of how YHWH speaks to his people in the so-called Holiness Code (H, Lev 17–26) is taken up by Reinhard Müller in the fifth chapter. He argues that the phrase "I am YHWH" interspersed throughout this section mediates YHWH's voice through the scriptural text itself, particularly as priests read them before the community. Their recitation of "I am YHWH" manifested his presence while also reminding the people of his distinct voice and authority—that is, the law heard through the voice of the priest was nevertheless divine commandment for their sanctification.

In chapter six James Watts pursues the significance of the sin and guilt offerings legislated in Lev 4–5. He asserts these offerings were lucrative innovations by priests amidst the political decline of Judah's royalty throughout the eighth to sixth century B.C. Given the catastrophe of exile, the priests hedged their claims (and status), along with the role of these offerings, by delimiting their atoning efficacy to unintentional sins. Within the rhetorical context of the Torah, the sin and guilt offerings likely addressed the reader's need for ritual atonement textually.

Christoph Nihan's essay in chapter seven studies the connection between blood disposal and the work of the כפר ritual for unintentional sin in Lev 4. Rejecting prevalent proposals which require a co-herent, uniform meaning for blood or its use, he suggests the blood ritual for the sin offering established a relationship between the offerer and the inaccessible deity, which in turn served to mark out ("index") the role of

the sanctuary in the community, along with distinguishing the various social and political hierarchies of Israel.

Leigh Trevaskis compares the prohibitions on sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman in Lev 15:24 (designated a P text) and 20:18 (designated H), investigating why the penalty in the latter text, being cut off from the people, is more severe than in the former, which merely involved seven days of impurity. Beyond the assumption that Lev 15:24 refers to inadvertent ritual violation while Lev 20:18 addresses intentional sin, he proposes that the woman in the “impurity (הגד) of her uncleanness” in H (cf. 18:19) serves to symbolize forbidden “abominable customs” (18:30). Though not explored in this contribution, it is interesting that Lev 18:19, which is connected to the P text by use of הגד, does not itself delineate any penalty, while in 20:18, which legislates being cut off, the term הגד is not actually used but rather הוד, opening the possibility that two different scenarios with a bleeding woman may be being addressed.

In chapter nine, Deborah Rooke examines the gendered terminology of the blasphemer narrative (Lev 24:10–23), yielding some brilliant insights. The story draws a boundary between Israel and other nations, rejecting the blasphemer’s Egyptian identity, which has already been associated with profaning the name of God (Lev 22:32–33).

Francis Landy’s essay in chapter ten presents a structuralist analysis of the laws of the שטח and the Nazarite in Numbers 5–6 (the volume’s focus on Leviticus notwithstanding). Landy argues that both cases involve liminal persons who pose a problem for priestly order and which must be addressed by either elimination or reincorporation.

In the eleventh chapter, Rüdiger Schmitt approaches the diseased house legislation (Lev 14:33–57) as an “intellectual ritual.” Observing its lack of performative detail, Schmitt claims the text functions as didactic literature, promoting the spiritual and social control of priests as indispensable ritual specialists.

Ida Fröhlich examines the three sins that defile the land in H: inappropriate cultic practices, bloodshed, and sexual transgression, focusing on how the latter category may lead to disinheritance not only in ritual texts, but also in historical narratives and in later texts (from Qumran and *I Enoch*) that interpret biblical tradition.

Jeremy Milgrom closes the volume with a personal reflection on his father’s seminal work in Leviticus, conveying Milgrom’s deep appreciation for ancient ritual and its relevance for the pressing issues of contemporary life.

Some of the foregoing essays are marked by needlessly negative presumptions about the text’s priestly provenance. Nevertheless this volume as a whole contributes insightful analysis and constructive

scholarship, demonstrating the benefit of alternate approaches. Schools with post-graduate biblical studies will want it in their library.

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*From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence: A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel* by Joel Barker. Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 11. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014. xi + 284 pp., US \$44.50, hardcover.

Joel Barker is assistant professor of Biblical Studies at Heritage College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario. The book is a revised version of his Ph.D. dissertation written under the direction of Mark Boda at McMaster Divinity College. In it, he applies an emerging model of rhetorical criticism to the book of Joel. His model of rhetorical analysis was originally adopted from the study of ancient Greek rhetoric by G. Kennedy and applied to New Testament interpretation. It has been adapted by K. Möller and C. Shaw for use with the prophetic texts of Amos and Micah, respectively. Barker's main thesis is that rhetorical analysis provides a framework for a unified reading of Joel.

An introduction surveys the methodologies employed to interpret Joel and their results. Joel is well suited for rhetorical analysis because there is such little evidence that would help to locate the book in an identifiable historical setting. Barker also argues that the possibility of a unified reading of Joel revealed through rhetorical analysis deserves to be considered when evaluating arguments for a multi-layered history of redaction behind the final form of the book. The same holds for arguments that Joel represents a major redactional stage in the formation of the Book of the Twelve as a whole. Chapter 1 describes the model of rhetorical analysis to be applied to Joel. It contains four primary elements: the rhetorical unit and constitutive subunits; the rhetorical situation addressed, implied, or created by the text; the rhetorical strategy revealed in the structure, choice, and form of language; and the rhetorical effectiveness of the text in addressing the issues determined by the rhetorical situation.

Chapters 2–8 apply the rhetorical model to the major units within Joel. Joel 1:1–14 introduces the rhetorical situation of the book by describing the threat posed by a locust plague and accompanying agricultural crisis. The text identifies groups within the community and calls them to recognize the severity of the threat and to respond by

gathering under the leadership of the priests in order to seek divine aid for their threatened condition. Joel 1:15–20 makes a transition from the announcement of the crisis to the active expression of lament while deepening the awareness of the threat by invoking the Day of the Lord. Joel 2:1–11 increases the sense of urgency and the associations with the Day of the Lord by describing the plague as an invading army, its sights set on Zion, with none other than YHWH leading the advance. The turning point comes in Joel 2:12–17 in the prophet's call to repentance, a call motivated by the revealed character of YHWH and containing specific instructions regarding the ritual and verbal form this repentance should take. The results of the presumed repentance urged in 2:12–17 are reported in 2:18–27 as YHWH removes the threat, the people are called to rejoice, and YHWH promises restoration. Such results underscore the persuasiveness of the prophet's appeals. Joel 3:1–5 and 4:1–21 make use of the persuasive capital gained in Joel 1:1–2:28 by making further promises of future restoration and salvation. Joel 3:1–5 and 4:1–21 nevertheless exceed the first section of Joel in the cosmic scope of the events portrayed, their undetermined future orientation, and the heightened drama of the events to come. Barker highlights these tensions while pointing out several elements of rhetorical and logical continuity. A concluding chapter summarizes the persuasive power of the book of Joel as a literary unit.

Barker effectively demonstrates the benefits of his method of rhetorical analysis for reading the book of Joel. Though the method originated in the study of Greek rhetoric, the criticism that may be applied to this work—that it is anachronistic to employ Greek rhetoric in the study of Hebrew literature—does not hold in this particular application of the method to Joel. It would be interesting to see if the method would be as helpful when applied to a book like Zephaniah, for example, which is more formally diverse and lacks the implied narrative structure that one finds in Joel. Another appeal of Barker's method is that it does not require a firm conclusion to the difficult question of the historical setting of Joel. Nevertheless, the rhetorical situation of the book receives sharper focus if one accepts a postexilic setting. The fragility of the agrarian economy, the role of the priests, the sensitivity to the threatened status of Zion, and the absence of any armed defense in postexilic Yehud strengthen the text's rhetorical urgency and sharpen its appeal for the merciful intervention of YHWH. The generalized guilt depicted in postexilic penitential prayers (Ezra 9, Neh 9, and Dan 9) would also mitigate the unresolved question of what sins Joel urged the community to repent of. Though Barker's rhetorical analysis strengthens the argument for a postexilic setting, it nevertheless does not require such a setting. It is arguably more in keeping with the scriptural status of Joel to

apply the outcome of the prophet's call to repentance, as Barker does, to the future setting portrayed in chapters 3 and 4 than to the reconstructed events behind chapters 1 and 2. The treatment of Joel as a self-contained literary unit also fits with other recent studies that show resistance to the theory of the Book of the Twelve as a compositional unit, or at least insist on analysis of the individual books within the Twelve before addressing the question of compositional layers across the larger corpus of the Twelve. Finally, Barker's method does successfully provide a framework for reading Joel as a unified text. His reading acknowledges the tensions within the book, but provides a rational basis for holding the tensions together within the logic of the book's overall argument. His method does not require a conclusion of a single layer of composition, but it does demonstrate a sense of coherence within the final form of the book.

The method of rhetorical analysis that derived from the study of Greek literature has produced a significant and growing body of work that has been illuminating for the study of New Testament texts. Barker's work shows that this method can be successfully adapted to Hebrew prophetic literature with good results. Barker's work provides a helpful model for rhetorical commentaries on Old Testament works similar to recent commentaries in the area of New Testament studies. Scholars and students who wish to employ rhetorical criticism in the study of Old Testament texts would have benefited from a bibliography of the works used by Barker, although this limitation may have been imposed by the series or the publisher. Nevertheless, all who seek a clearer understanding of the argument and message of the book of Joel will benefit from this work.

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*Focusing Biblical Studies: The Crucial Nature of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods. Essays in Honor of Douglas A. Knight* edited by Jon L. Berquist and Alice Hunt. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 544. London/New York: T & T Clark, 2012. xxii + 255 pp. US \$140.00, hardcover.

With the contributions to this *festschrift*, colleagues and former students honor the scholarly and pedagogical legacy of Douglas A. Knight. Pages xvii–xxii provide Knight's publication record, which bears witness to his numerous contributions to critical scholarship at the highest levels as



well as his deep concern for the ethical implications of interpreting the Bible. The totality of the list of contributors—which includes Jon Berquist, Robert Wilson, Norman Gottwald, James Crenshaw, and many others—is immediately impressive. It also testifies to the importance of Knight's impact on biblical studies.

The contributions are impressive both in their breadth and in their relevance for current issues and discussions in the field. For example, Israel Finkelstein answers criticisms of his recent publications that argue for a second-century B.C. Hellenistic date for the lists of returnees in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2:1–67; Neh 7:6–68). Philip Davies presents a case for separate and independent origins for Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah, arguing that any previous unity (i.e., a unified kingdom of Israel) in the biblical witness is the result of a powerful cultural memory resulting from Judah's assumption of an Israel-identity subsequent to the northern kingdom's fall. In light of his case, Davies proposes a new genre: a history of Judah. Robert Wilson surveys recent scholarship on the prophetic literature that deals with composition and the production of texts in the Persian period. Although he deftly contributes to the common theory of an elite class of scribes and their unique role(s) in this enterprise, he cautions that there are still many unanswered questions about the production of prophetic literature as a whole (perhaps especially the relationship between oral and written literature). This sampling is adequate to make the point about the volume as a whole: its contributions cover a large cross-section of issues and are highly relevant for present discussions and scholarly currents in the field right now.

Despite the book's obvious academic rigor and its relevance for present issues, evangelicals will likely find many of the conclusions problematic. As the field shifts further away from the perpetually crumbling pan-Babylonianism that once dominated critical discussions on the origins of all things Old Testament, a newer "pan-Persian" explanation is concretizing as a common replacement and, undoubtedly, a substantial scholarly current in the field. Therefore, the context of Persian Empire (as well as the subsequent Hellenistic context) becomes the Petri dish out of which grew the Old Testament. For example, Kristin Swanson explains Judges as a satirical piece that provides social commentary on Ezra's leadership and addresses Persian-era concerns for the identity of the "other." For Niels Peter Lemche, "The schism between the North and the South found in the collective memory of the Old Testament can easily be explained in light of political, religious, and demographic developments in the Persian and Hellenistic periods" (p. 48). He says forthrightly of the Davidic Kingdom, "This kingdom never

existed” (p. 42). I suppose what emerges from the volume is actually more of a pan-Persian-Hellenism combination.

That is not to say the volume lacks excellent information. To the contrary, there are numerous troves of helpful observations for everyone in the field. A particularly lucid and informative piece is Jack Sasson’s investigation of the tenth commandment about covetousness. This essay is remarkable because of the breadth of primary and secondary sources that it engages in so short a space as well as its penetrating observations and meaningful conclusions. Furthermore, the sum of the volume is most definitely useful for bringing readers up to speed on some of the central currents in critical scholarship. The contributors have shaped and continue to shape their respective niches and the field as a whole. That point is beyond dispute.

For evangelicals, however (a constituency of which I am a participant, and whose basic ideologies—difficult as they can sometimes be to define—I undoubtedly share), many conclusions in the volume, as well as the larger implication that most of (if not all of) the Old Testament emerged from the Persian and Hellenistic periods, are untenable and very difficult (for all intents and purposes, impossible) to accept. The issue is the place and role of the Bible itself in the investigative process. A quote by Israel Finkelstein illustrates the point: “I tend to give archaeology a central, independent role and treat the text as a stratified literary work whose layers are embedded with the ideological goals of their authors and the realities of their time” (p. 50). For Finkelstein, then, archaeology is admittedly primary and the text secondary (or perhaps, central and marginal, respectively). There is an irony in all of this. Archaeology, though working through thousands of years of time and multitudinous, shifting layers of cultural strata and seemingly infinite pieces of *realia* is “independent”; however, it is “the text” that is stratified and in flux. Of course, Finkelstein’s place for the Bible—though at the margins—is still too much for Lemke, who criticizes Finkelstein for having “fallen into the same trap as many biblical scholars—trying to rescue whatever can be saved from ‘ancient Israel’” (p. 43). So, for evangelicals there is a root, ideological gap that ultimately problematizes this volume’s contributions. The biblical witness is (usually) present in the investigative process, but it is far too marginalized as a factor and witness.

Based on these observations, I recommend the volume only to those in the guild who wish to see windows into some of the more reconstructive and biblically skeptical academic currents in the field. For those wanting more comprehensive treatments of the Persian era in general, I recommend leaving this work behind and consulting the major historical works by Pierre Briant and Amélie Kuhrt. For those wanting a

conservative integration of Persian history and the biblical witness, I recommend the pertinent works by Edwin Yamauchi, whose thorough historical investigations have ensured their ongoing relevance.

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*The Days of Creation: A History of Christian Interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:3* by Andrew J. Brown. History of Biblical Interpretation 4. Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2014, xii + 361 pp., US \$37.95.

It is a pleasant thing when one encounters a book that fills a need in scholarship. It is still more pleasant when, upon reading, one finds that book to be thoroughly researched and clearly written. I was thus delighted to read Andrew Brown's *The Days of Creation*. The volume offers a comprehensive look at the history of Christian interpretation of the "days" of the first creation narrative in Genesis. Anyone acquainted with contemporary secondary literature on this subject has encountered sweeping claims about what the tradition does and does not say, typically used to bolster the interpreter's own exegesis of the text. Brown's volume definitively demonstrates that the only broad claim one can make about the tradition on this subject is that broad claims are hard to make. Manifold Christian commentators have weighed in on the original intent of this text, and a variety of positions have been espoused for a variety of reasons.

The book contains seven chapters, a plump bibliography (37 pages), and several useful indexes (26 pages). In addition to the author, the publisher deserves credit as the volume is well laid out, generally well edited (although the occasional error appears), and reasonably priced.

After a brief introductory chapter in which Brown lays out his project, the meat of the study commences in chapter 2, "The Days of Creation in the Church Fathers." He begins in fact somewhat prior to that, noting the literal interpretation of Josephus and the ideal, non-literal interpretation of Philo. The difference witnessed between these two well-known Jewish interpreters adumbrates what one finds in Christian interpretation over the following two millennia, and indeed, Brown credits Philo with being a source of some of the ensuing non-literal interpretation among the church fathers (p. 20). Irenaeus, for example, espoused a world-week interpretive scheme according to which each day represented one thousand years, to culminate soon in Jesus's millennial

reign on earth (pp. 22–23). Origen too eschewed literal interpretation, seeing that as inconsistent with God’s character; he instead favored a timeless, essentially instantaneous creation. Instantaneous creation also became the position of Augustine, who receives a more thorough treatment than any other interpreter in the book—justifiable given not only Augustine’s lasting influence and repute, but also how frequently and erroneously he is invoked by modern interpreters. Brown shows that, despite the title of Augustine’s *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he considered creation over a span of time incompatible with God’s character: “We cannot be so foolish or rash as to imagine that any such temporal good would accrue to the Eternal and Unchangeable” (p. 48, citing Augustine, *Literal Meaning*, 4.18.34). Brown explains that “Although he takes ‘day’ metaphorically, this for Augustine remains literal exegesis” (p. 52). Brown eventually assesses him as follows: “Yet Augustine’s literal meaning certainly stretches the definition of ‘literal’ meaning and minimizes historical reality . . .” (p. 53). But Augustine was not the only voice of his era. Brown also draws attention to the contemporary Antiochene tradition, which favored literal days, and the Cappadocian tradition, where one sees an adherence to literal days but a simultaneous questioning of this view.

Chapter 3 covers “The Days of Creation in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance,” during which time one observes a gradual shift away from Augustine’s view of instantaneous creation toward a more literal understanding of the six days. This shift can be illustrated by important figures at either end: in the early eighth century, the Venerable Bede adopted the idea of instantaneous creation but qualifies this that the various created things “were brought into being instantly on their respective days” (p. 62, emphasis Brown’s). Five hundred years later, Nicholas of Lyra had almost entirely shed Augustine’s position, interpreting the days with an “avowed literalism” (p. 93). The key figure between these two, of course, was Thomas Aquinas, whom Brown considers a “turning point” (p. 102) in the interpretation of the days of creation. Brown reflects, “Thomas’ synthesis of interpretations of the creation narrative in Genesis reveals an appreciation for the philosophical serviceability of Augustine’s view, but at the same time the growing admission of its poor compatibility with the plain sense of the biblical text” (pp. 89–90); this rejection of Augustine’s view smoothed the road for many later interpreters to follow suit.

In chapter 4, “The Days of Creation in the Era of the Reformation,” Brown tackles the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the first part of this period, both Catholicism and the burgeoning Protestant movement were marked by emphatic belief in the clarity of Scripture and that ordinary humans can grasp the meaning of Scripture.

For this and other reasons, interpretation of the days of creation as literal 24-hour periods dominated scholarship during this time, and is found among such figures as Martin Luther and John Calvin. Like Aquinas, many theologians of this era struggled to adhere to the writings of the church fathers—particularly Augustine. While favoring literal interpretation, such vacillation can be summarized by one of Brown's notes: "Every church father must however be brought to the bar of Scripture, and Luther's advice is 'to read them with discretion'" (p. 111, quoting Luther's *Lecture's on Genesis*, 61). This literalist bent gave rise to increased interest in establishing world chronologies, leading to the attempts to date the creation of the universe by John Lightfoot (1647) and, more famously, James Ussher (1650). Non-literal treatments of Gen 1 did appear throughout this time, but they remained on the periphery until the latter part of the seventeenth century. By this time the biblical creation account had begun to receive challenges from the natural sciences, namely astronomy, in which Copernicus's heliocentric theory had won the day, and geology, where hard-to-explain fossils regularly emerged. Isaac Newton did his best to reconcile the new scientific evidence with the biblical account by being one of the pioneers of the day-age theory, wherein the "days" of creation corresponded to longer periods of time in which the cosmogonic events occurred. His contemporary and interlocutor, Thomas Burnet, dispensed with Gen 1 altogether—counterintuitively, out of respect for the biblical text—by asserting that it described only the present form of the earth, not its ultimate origins. From this point on, all commentators were forced to take the natural sciences into account when interpreting the days of creation, and in many cases "philosophy, the handmaiden of divinity, usurps her mistress" (p. 157).

Chapters 5 and 6, "The Days of Creation and the Ambition of Reason in the Eighteenth Century," and "Nineteenth-Century Interpretation of the Days of Creation until the Origin of Species and Essays and Reviews," chronicle interpretations of Gen 1 as the field of geology became better and more widely understood. As the incompatibility of geologists' results and the literal understanding of the days of creation became more widely recognized, an array of harmonizing proposals arose, including diluvial theories which understood the geological strata as having settled during Noah's flood, ruin-restitution theories in which an older world was devastated and then restored just prior to the creation week, mystical interpretations, and more. But while naturalists continued to attempt to reconcile their findings with Gen 1, the "'balance of power' between the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture was shifting . . . in the Western mind" (p. 169). In the first half of the nineteenth century, three main theories competed, the "semi-concordist" (see p. 197 *passim*)

gap theory which consigned the long geological epochs to the period prior to Gen 1:3, the concordist day-age theory which interpreted the “days” of creation as epochs but kept the order of creation in tact (akin to the most common form of today’s “old-earth creationism”), and a literal, young-earth approach. Interestingly, around mid-century—prior to Darwin’s seminal work—under the increasing influence of the natural sciences, scholars tended simply to ignore the Genesis account when pondering the earth’s origins. All three views of reconciling Gen 1 with scientific evidence lost ground, with “‘young-earth’ belief [becoming] dormant and virtually undetectable in published literature for decades to come” (p 240; cf. qualifying remarks on p. 295). Brown attributes this to both the increasing gap between scientific and biblical authority, and the increasing influence of historical criticism, especially among the clergy, hence his placement of the watershed *Essays and Reviews* on par with the *Origin of Species* in the title of the chapter.

Brown fittingly concludes with a seventh chapter, “The Shape of the History of Christian Interpretation of Genesis 1:1–2:3,” in which he not only summarizes the preceding discussion but also helpfully assesses the importance of the history of interpretation for present views of and debates about the creation narrative.

I read all that Brown had written, and it was very good. There is much to praise about this book. Brown lucidly presents, explains, and contextualizes (and occasionally assesses) an array of interpretations. He judiciously chooses what material to include in his historical survey. He manages to be thorough and meticulous while (usually) avoiding excessive detail, keeping what could have been a bloated volume at a manageable 298 pages of text. Dividing all the material into six main chapters and a concluding seventh also furnishes a clever homage to the hexaemeral source material. If I were to search for flaws, I could only find two. First, as with many historical surveys, the writing at times becomes rather dull. The occasional exclamation points Brown inserts in a well-intentioned but futile effort to spice things up only draw more attention to this. Second, in a few spots Brown misses the forest for the trees, focusing on the minutiae of peripheral interpretations without adequately placing them in historical and intellectual context. Such lapses are rare, though, and neither of these peccadillos significantly detracts from the volume.

What is most impressive is that Brown somehow covers nearly two millennia of charged interpretations of a text that continues to inspire heated debate without any apparent agenda. (Indeed, after finishing the book I can only guess at Brown’s own position; this is no small feat.) Not until the final chapter does he challenge any modern interpreters of the Gen 1 account, and here he calls out scholars on both sides of the

main evangelical divide (old earth and young earth) in equal measure. After a few quotations of particularly heinous misuse of the Christian tradition by contemporary writers, Brown states, “All of this serves as a warning against an unvetted eagerness to recruit ancestral support for modern viewpoints without an accompanying willingness to do the serious historical research required” (p. 285). This articulates what has already become evident through a careful reading of the book and is one of the most significant payoffs of *The Days of Creation*. Nearly every conceivable interpretation of the creation narrative has a long and illustrious pedigree. Conservative readers cannot reasonably claim that Darwin is to blame for all old-earth readings and think that if one denies evolution all problems with literal days go away. In fact, for centuries before Darwin, countless Christian interpreters struggled with a literal interpretation for other scientific reasons (challenges from astronomy and geology nearly vanquished literal interpretations before evolution even caught on) as well as for theological (why would God require time to create?), scriptural (the apocryphal Sir 18:1 suggests instantaneous creation, to say nothing of the difficulties of reconciling Gen 1 with Gen 2, including the apparently single day of creation in Gen 2:4b), and logical (how could there be three days before the creation of the sun?) reasons. On the other hand, more progressive readers of Gen 1 display stunning ignorance when perpetuating the canard that literal interpretation of the days of creation is a relatively recent invention of fundamentalists. Literal interpretation was known among the church fathers and became the standard reading for much of the Middle Ages, as can be easily seen in the writings of such figures as Thomas Aquinas or Martin Luther. In sum, Brown has made it much easier to call the lie on those who caricature and misconstrue opposing views.

*The Days of Creation* should thus impose some much-needed order onto a conversation that has often been תהו ובהו. For this, Andrew Brown deserves our thanks. This reviewer would love to see him embark on a similar project on the historical interpretation of Genesis 2–3, but perhaps, having completed this work, it is time for him to rest.

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*Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel: Prophet, Priest, Sage and People* by Aaron Chalmers. London: SPCK, 2012. xv + 159 pp., £14.99, softcover.

Aaron Chalmers teaches Old Testament and Hermeneutics at Tabor Adelaide, Australia, as the head of the School of Ministry, Theology, and Culture. In *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel*, Chalmers writes an introductory text for the non-specialist (i.e., beginning students) in an attempt to inform the general lack of knowledge and dispel common misconceptions concerning the primary participants in the religion of ancient Israel. He provides a socio-historical reconstruction of the social locations and roles of four members within the religion of ancient Israel: prophet, priest, sage, and common people.

Chalmers restricts discussion in chapter 1 to the three sources used for reconstructing the religious and social world of ancient Israel: the OT text, ancient Near Eastern texts, and Syro-Palestinian archeology. Chalmers grants to the OT text a role in his socio-historical reconstruction because correlations with extra-biblical inscriptions and archeology lead him to believe the OT “faithfully represent[s] life in the Iron Age period” (p. 6), even though he contends, “Most of the OT, at least in its final form, clearly postdates the events it is recording” (p. 2). Ancient Near Eastern texts, according to Chalmers, provide a valuable source for socio-historical reconstruction. The author gives helpful and balanced remarks to help the beginning student navigate between the dangers of uncritical comparison (parallelomania), on the one hand, and the refusal to compare the OT text with another society’s texts (parallelophobia), on the other. Concerning Syro-Palestinian archaeology, Chalmers proposes a balanced approach, suggesting that one source (the Bible or archaeology) is not better than the other. “It all depends on precisely what we are trying to reconstruct” (p. 12).

In chapters 2, 3, and 4, Chalmers offers a reconstruction of the priest, prophet, and sage in the religion of ancient Israel by posing three questions to each figure. How did one become a priest, prophet, or sage? What did one do as a priest, prophet, or sage? And where could one find a priest, prophet, or sage? Of particular interest is chapter 4, where Chalmers reconstructs the image of a sage in the society of ancient Israel. Building upon the insights of von Rod and Crenshaw, Chalmers provides reasoned evidence and arguments that the sage in ancient Israel likely taught, advised, and arbitrated disputes and were situated “within the royal court and key educational centres (if these existed)” (p. 87).

Before moving into the fifth and final chapter, Chalmers provides a brief excursus on the role of the king in the religious life of ancient Israel, arguing the king played a crucial role by establishing, maintaining, and reforming the central cult (e.g., David and Solomon in Jerusalem and Jeroboam I in Dan).

Chalmers concludes his study with a reconstruction of the religious life of the common people of ancient Israel in chapter 5. As in



previous chapters, Chalmers structures the material around a series of questions covering whom, where, and when the common people worshipped. The common people, according to Chalmers, engaged in a form of religion in contrast with “the form of religion that we find enshrined in the OT and, in particular, its legal sections” (p. 98). Chalmers reconstructs the religious life of the people largely through archaeological findings, noting the OT offers little with regard to the beliefs and practices of the common people. Yet, he correctly brings to light OT texts that correlate the picture presented by archaeology.

*Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* presents a number of strengths that make it a suitable text, at least pedagogically speaking, for beginning students. First, Chalmers writes in clear and simple prose, increasing the book’s effectiveness as an entry-level text. Second, the book is arranged in a delightful way with informative discussions that introduce the student to important scholars (e.g., Dever, Wellhausen, von Rad), orient him or her to significant debates (e.g., the minimalist-maximalist debate), and highlight various ancient Near Eastern parallels and archaeological insights (e.g., the Baal cycle, the sanctuary at Tel Dan, Asherah inscriptions from ancient Israel). Third, the book provides helpful direction for students who desire more with a bibliography at the end of each chapter. Each bibliography includes the best in recent scholarship and reflects a wide spectrum of scholarly opinion. Finally, the greatest strength of *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* is the concise yet comprehensive manner with which Chalmers introduces household and family religion in ancient Israel. Chalmers displays here, as he does elsewhere in the book, familiarity with the current state of the discipline. His focus on family religion in ancient Israel is timely given the publication in the same year of William Dever’s *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where the Bible and Archeology Intersect* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) and Rainer Albertz’s and Rüdiger Schmitt’s *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

Yet *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* presents at least two weaknesses. First, Chalmers restricts his study to “social world” questions, noting in contrast that the OT “focuses on religious and theological issues” (p. 2) and that the “text’s primary theological and kerygmatic focus means that almost everything that interests us in our attempt at socio-historical reconstruction appears only peripherally or incidentally” (p. 7). One wonders why religious and theological issues do not at least help answer “social-world” questions. The religious or theological beliefs of the prophet, priest, sage, or common person would indeed seem to help reconstruct a fuller picture for each member. It is indeed curious then to find statements such as, “ANE texts have the

potential to provide significant insight into the religious beliefs and practices of the common people” (p. 10). This tension may have been alleviated if Chalmers would have offered a rationale for separating religious and theological beliefs from “social-world” questions; or, perhaps if he would have defined religious beliefs and/or theological issues. Second, a discussion on the role of the interpreter or historian in the process of socio-historical reconstruction would improve this book. Beginning students need to be made aware of the impact a historian’s epistemology and/or worldview can have on the outcome of historical reconstruction (see Jens Bruun Kofoed, “Epistemology, Historiographical Method, and the ‘Copenhagen School’” in *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of “Biblical Israel”* [ed. V. Philips Long, David W. Baker, and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002]).

Despite these criticisms, Chalmers accomplishes his goal to provide an accessible introductory text to the religion of ancient Israel for the beginning student or non-specialist. *Exploring the Religion of Ancient Israel* is well balanced and researched. Chalmers navigates well between various extremes and the difficult land between biblical studies and archaeology. I would recommend this as a supplemental text to a book on the history of “biblical Israel” because Chalmers effectively brings out the nitty-gritty of “real life” in ancient Israel. Not all will agree with Chalmers’s middle-of-the-road stance between minimalist and maximalist historians. Yet, his balanced approach models for students a way to weigh the evidence without necessarily inculcating him or her in an interpretative tradition.

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*The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan. Jerusalem: Carta, 2008. xiii + 250 pp., US \$64.00, hardcover.

*Bound for Exile: Israelites and Judeans Under Imperial Yoke, Documents from Assyria and Babylonia* translated and annotated by Mordechai Cogan. Jerusalem: Carta, 2013. xiii + 177 pp., US \$64.00, hardcover.

Mordechai Cogan is professor emeritus of biblical history at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Having written several books, including

commentaries on books of the Hebrew Bible, in Hebrew and English, Cogan displays a scholarly prowess that few can mirror. This review will treat *Raging Torrent* and *Bound for Exile* as a pair, both of which further display his scholarly capabilities. *Raging Torrent* easily stands alone, but *Bound for Exile* often refers readers to passages in the earlier volume to provide needed context. Consequently, publishing these as a single volume would have helped.

*Raging Torrent* and *Bound for Exile* are printed on semi-glossy paper and are about the size of an electronic tablet, though about twice as thick each. These titles are selective anthologies primarily of ancient Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts related to the ancient Hebrew kingdoms. Both volumes contain black and white photographs of ancient reliefs, monuments, and other artifacts printed occasionally alongside associated texts. *Raging Torrent* contains 25 images and *Bound for Exile* contains 37. Both titles provide helpful black and white maps illustrating military campaigns or locations associated with the ancient excerpts with which they are associated. Although the maps are black and white, they are well done and are an especially valuable part of these volumes. The regional shading, different kinds of arrows, and selection of toponyms on each map offers helpful clarification and broad orientation. *Raging Torrent* contains eight maps and *Bound for Exile* contains six. Both titles conclude with brief glossary, chronological tables, and indexes of biblical references, divine names, persons, and geographical and ethnic names. Each chapter is self-contained, with each section of the chapter concluding with its own bibliography.

Cogan's explanations are consistently brief. The introduction to each volume is 10 pages, including bibliography. Each new section within chapters typically begins with an introduction of one to four short paragraphs. Cogan's economic style keeps the focus on the ancient texts themselves. After the presentation of the translation, Cogan offers brief commentary of key passages or explains difficult or idiomatic expressions. The passage-by-passage comments may provide historical details or may make comparisons to terms or expressions in Akkadian, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, and so on. This is typically done by non-technical transliteration in the respective font as needed to illustrate a given point. The commentary often cites relevant biblical passages and provides cross references to relevant passages in Cogan's pair of anthologies. Each text provides a list of the published texts and other available English translations of the texts, as well as secondary literature cited in Cogan's introductions and explanatory notes.

The layout and the elements offered make these well suited for academic use. Students and courses will benefit by the sustained serious yet accessible introduction and commentary, as well as the judicious

commitment to brevity. These same virtues could make these handbooks useful to preachers and other ministers of the Scriptures as well. These volumes are readable, and both comprehensive and concise, and offer all-in-one guidance for study.

The chapters of *Raging Torrent* are arranged chronologically from the mid-ninth century to the late sixth century B.C.E., most named for emperors: (1) Shalmaneser III, (2) Adad-nerari III, (3) Shalmaneser IV, (4) Tiglath-pileser III, (5) Sargon II, (6) Sennacherib, (7) Esarhaddon, (8) Ashurbanipal, (9) Assyrian Eponym Chronicle, (10) Neo-Babylonian Chronicles, (11) Nebuchadnezzar II, (12) Cyrus II, King of Persia. Cogan typically provides a single witness to an emperor's annals (presumably selected for its virtues). For example, Cogan selected the earliest version of Sennacherib's campaign against Judah (from the Rassam Cylinder) along with three other passages that relate to biblical events (pp. 111–29) versus Cogan's translation of these same texts along with texts commemorating Sennacherib's campaigns against Merodach-baladan and Babylon in COS (2:300–305) versus eight different versions of Sennacherib's annals in Luckenbill (ARAB, 2:115–159) versus the final edition from the Taylor Prism in ANET (pp. 287–88).

Below is a selection that exemplifies Cogan's commentary. It comes from a portion of the Taylor Prism that speaks about the Assyrian response to Hezekiah's refusal to submit and pay tribute in 701 B.C.E. As shown, translation of selected annalistic records in full is followed by specific passages repeated in boldface font along with commentary:

**I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil**—The number of captives deported is extremely large and is at odds with the population estimates of the kingdom of Judah suggested by archaeologists, who set it at approximately 120,000; see Shiloh 1981; Broshi and Finkelstein 1992. The Assyrian scribes sought to enhance the king's victory by inflating the numbers; on this practice, see De Odorico 1995:172–174; for a different opinion, see Millard 1991. (p. 120; the full references are included at the end of the section).

**He himself [Hezekiah], I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with armed posts, and made it unthinkable (literally, 'taboo') for him to exit by city gate**—The topography of Jerusalem did not easily permit the use of siege-wall technique, and so instead, fortified

positions were erected to cut the city off from the outside world.  
(p. 120)

The brief commentary is typical of what Cogan provides for all the selections in the pair of anthologies under review. By way of comparison, ANET and ARAB provide translation but no notes on these selections, and COS offers a few minor text oriented notes but no commentary. The informative commentary sets Cogan's reader apart from typical biblical background readers.

Cogan's second volume offers a much-needed collection of the disparate and fragmentary evidence of exilic life of Israel and Judah. Over the past couple of decades numerous articles and short studies have appeared explaining the significance of recovered evidence like the celebrated "city of Judah" (āl Yaḥudu) as one of the refugee communities in the outskirts of Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E.

The chapters of *Bound for Exile* are arranged topically/chronologically around the exiles of Israel and Judah respectively: (1) Assyrian Provinces of Magiddu and Samerina, (2) Israelites in Assyrian Exile, (3) Treatises and Oaths in the Assyrian Empire, (4) Kingdom of Judah as an Assyrian Vassal, (5) Judeans in Assyrian Exile, (6) Judeans in Babylonian Exile. Cogan finds the biblical texts historically reliable, to a large extent, and sees the various kinds of ancient texts and text fragments corroborating and illuminating the biblical text. In a few places, Cogan expresses skepticism concerning the historical accuracy of selected biblical texts.

While *Raging Torrent* presents official empire texts, the collection of texts in *Bound for Exile* is of a different order. Cogan explains in the introduction:

Though the royal inscriptions provide a basic picture of the course of political and military events, they are ideological compositions that fail the investigator who asks: Under what conditions did the captives live in their new homes? Were they settled in groups according to place of origin or as individuals, dispersed randomly? Can their social status—slaves, state dependents, homesteaders—be determined? Partial answer can be found in the texts that were generated in the routine operation of the imperial bureaucracies; in addition, there are the everyday, common texts that accompanied the course of the daily lives of the people who lived under their thumb. (p. 1)

Since "[t]hese documents were not subject to ideological constraints" they need to be interpreted with a different set of concerns (p. 1). The

sectional introductions in this volume frequently draw explicit attention to passages in the Hebrew Bible which the texts illuminate.

The diverse texts collected, introduced, and briefly explained by Cogan provide readers glimpses of the fate of the exiles. Some exiles of Israel served among the chariot troops. Many served as a part of building projects, bricklaying, and canal digging (see ch. 2). The sparse evidence of Judean exiles in Assyria reveals some as laborers in building projects while others served as soldiers or musicians. In addition, traces of evidence point to aspects of refugee life like records of the sale of lands and persons, as well as the sleuthing required to get at the ethnicity of personal names (see ch. 5). Cogan also gathers together disparate clues to Judean life in Neo-Babylonian exile. These include the well-known records of rations for Jehoiachin as well as place names, personal names, and various mundane records like inheritances and forbidden marriages (see ch. 6). Readers can see for themselves the severe limitations in terms of the scarcity of historical testimony to the exilic existence of the Hebrews. At the same time, the gathered and explained evidence will help dissolve some longstanding ideas regarding the “long lost ten tribes of Israel.”

Sensationalistic and partisan interpretation of the exile of the ancient Hebrews has been commonplace in the past couple of decades. Students may run across parts of the large mass of “myth of the exile” studies, some extremely skeptical of the scriptural accounts. (For one work which gave rise to much allusion and consideration, see Hans Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the “Exilic” Period* [Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996]). Others have questioned the biases of some of these postmodern and minimalist scholars as being anti-Semitic (See Adele Berlin, “The Exile: Biblical Ideology and Its Postmodern Ideological Interpretation,” in *Literary Construction of Identity in the Ancient World* [ed. Hanna Liss and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010], 341–56). While determining possible relationships between anti-Semitic sentiment and scholarly ideology keeps the presses running and students talking, it does not necessarily translate into exegetical competency. *Bound for Exile* provides students a clear and accessible collection of primary sources to help negotiate historical judgments in the face of wildly disparate and often sparkly scholarly claims. Cogan is clear, careful, and reserved in his judgments. Cogan’s readers could provide useful complement to Gary N. Knoppers’s recent interpretation of the biblical and historical accounts of the exiles of the Israelites and Judeans, as he cuts through the heated debate about them (two chapters offer sustained interpretation of the much-contested exiles of the people of the ancient Hebrew kingdoms; see Gary N. Knoppers,

*Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2013], ch. 2, 5). While there is great value and necessity in secondary interpretations, there is also need for a collection of primary texts such as Cogan has put together. Students need a chance to read and study the very small cache of written evidence for themselves.

The value of Cogan's pair of anthologies is apparent for students and teachers of the Hebrew Bible. These readers could well serve courses devoted to 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and the Prophets, as well as historical background of the Old Testament. In addition, the brevity, clarity, and richness of these readers also makes them viable for use by the busy preacher or minister of the Scriptures. But the genre of biblical background anthologies raises philosophical issues.

Whenever I look through anthologies of materials designed for students of the Scriptures, I remember Jack Sasson's important scathing criticism of an ancient-texts reader some years ago ("On Relating 'Religious' Texts to the Old Testament," *MAARAV* 3 [1982]: 217–25). One of his criticisms is the tendency to "bibilicize" ancient texts that did not function analogously to the emerging authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. Another problem is fragmenting ancient sources to isolate the passages supposedly relevant to biblical interpretation. It is hard to disagree with Sasson's emphasis on considering ancient Near Eastern texts in their own rights and contexts. As a teacher, I worry about the mercenary spirit of taking historical artifacts and texts out of context to serve as ingredients in inadequate interpretation of the Scriptures. But the opposite problem of ignoring historical context is omnipresent among many parts of evangelical study and ministry. The choice does not need to be everything or nothing.

Mercenary agenda cannot replace serious study of ancient Near Eastern historical and religious texts in their own right as one part of the academic preparations to serve Christ and teach and preach the gospel. Students should study full texts in translation as part of academic training for exegesis. Yet, many of the textual witnesses to the ancient Near Eastern empires come in the form of monumental propaganda and text fragments of all sorts that are well suited to a collection of texts. The right kind of anthologies used well can help meet the need for sound biblical exegesis. Responsible Christian exegesis needs rich and yet brief collections of historical texts like those provided by Cogan.

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*Hidden Riches: A Source Book for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East* by Christopher B. Hayes. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014. xxv + 425 pp., US \$45.00, softcover.

In many respects, the OT is a product of its ancient Near Eastern milieu. This is incontrovertible thanks to the copious ancient Near Eastern texts discovered and translated since the 1800s. There are significant implications of this reality, and Hayes is correct to point out the most important implication when he states early in this volume that any claim for interpretive authority requires a level of cultural literacy. In other words, interpreters who exhibit a familiarity and capacity with the texts of the ancient Near East enjoy a greater level of respect and influence. I am inclined to agree. Consequently, this volume is a compendium of primary sources deemed by Hayes to be foundational for the cultural literacy necessary for quality biblical interpretation.

The volume is the result of years of teaching, as well as Hayes's dissatisfaction with available resources. Hayes notes that many resources offering primary texts from the ancient Near East do so in a minimalistic manner. There is often just the text with essentially no discussion of the background and/or relevant comparative data. Where such information does occur, it is often overly technical or too cumbersome for the typical undergraduate and/or seminary student (p. 5). Yet the goal of this monograph is more than just filling a personal conviction and perceived void. It seeks to be an influential voice in comparative studies. First, and fundamentally, it attempts "to make intelligent comparison between biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts" (p. 6). In addition, Hayes makes an exerted effort to offer a significant entry for each chosen text, which includes a discussion of the text's literary features and comparative phenomena. Third, Hayes intends that his presentation will function as a catalyst for the passionate and motivated student (p. 6). Thus, his ideas make no claim of finality, but instead they aim to engender thought and development.

The introduction consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 offers personal reflections on comparative studies, which are intermingled with declarations about the organizational principles governing the book. Chapter 2 offers the briefest of surveys regarding the developments within comparative studies as a sub-discipline. This is a very nice touch as it offers a historical and intellectual context for the work. Most importantly, though, this survey ultimately advocates a need for methodological balance. Comparative analyses are not about merely emphasizing the similarities or the differences. Both matter and both must be intelligently considered in light of each other. Furthermore, Hayes suggests that comparative analyses must be able to accommodate



and foster contemporary theological discourse if the sub-discipline hopes to enjoy a vibrant future. In other words, comparative studies must be able to develop models that will allow their respective conclusions to transcend an ancient context (pp. 35–36). Admittedly, this is a fascinating concept, but it is unfortunately unclear. If there is one thing that deserves attention or warrants further discussion, it is this issue.

The organization of this monograph mirrors the canonical divisions of the Hebrew Bible. There are sections devoted to the Pentateuch, the Former and Latter Prophets, and the Writings. Within each section, there are well-known comparisons—such as the Taylor Prism vs. 2 Kgs 18–19; ancient Near Eastern treaty texts vs. Deuteronomy; Enuma Elish vs. Gen 1–2; the biblical and Mesopotamian flood narratives—and there are lesser known comparisons—such as the Letter to Gadatas vs. Ezra 6; Hittite plagues and prayers vs. Pss 88–89; Udjahorresne vs. Nehemiah. Each chapter presents the chosen extrabiblical text with an introduction of basic historical data (date of composition, place of composition, original language, and translation notes) and a notification of the applicable biblical texts. After the text, Hayes presents a significant discussion, which offers an intelligent and responsible comparative analysis. After the discussion, there are reflection questions, which would serve nicely as a catalyst for debate in a classroom setting. A list of suggested readings closes out each chapter.

Hayes's discussions are undoubtedly the payoff for this monograph. Indeed, Hayes draws some interesting comparisons (e.g. the Baal Myth, Karatepe Inscription, Hos 2, 1 Kgs 18 and 2 Kgs 23 under the rubric of "Praise of Polemics for Baal"; pp. 287–96). Yet more impressive are his analyses, particularly since they are both methodologically balanced and insightful. Moreover, his thoughts offer plenty of fuel for subsequent debate. For example, Hayes is hesitant to draw too many connections between the birth narratives of Sargon and Moses. In short, Hayes believes that the differences are too significant, even those between the general contours of each narrative. Yet his statements about the sociological critique of Egypt implicit to the biblical account of Moses's birth encourage one to ponder the significance of socio-political criticism throughout the Exodus narrative (p. 118). Is this nuance of the Mosaic birth narrative symptomatic of a larger tendency driving the Exodus account?

Some of Hayes's critical positions likely will not sit well with some evangelicals, and Hayes recognizes this. However, for the purposes of evaluating this particular work, evangelicals need not be overly concerned with such details. Instead, the assessment of Hayes's work should stem from the quality of his analyses. Frankly, any concern over Hayes's position on critical issues should not prevent the adoption of this

work as a text for any relevant course or seminar. In my opinion, this text represents one of the most useful works devoted to introducing the methodological issues and fruit of comparative studies.

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*Isaiah 56–66* by R. Reed Lessing. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis: Concordia 2014. 600 pp., US \$54.99, hardcover.

This commentary is part of a series which, according to the editor's preface, "fully affirms the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture" and which maintains that the key message of the Bible as a whole is the Good News of God's work to reconcile the world to himself, through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. This review will explore to what extent Lessing's commentary on Isa 56–66 accomplishes these goals.

In the introduction, Lessing outlines the message of the concluding 11 chapters of the book of Isaiah when read together (although not consecutively): God is returning soon (56:1) to punish idolaters among his own people (59:16–18) and to differentiate between faithful and non-faithful servants (65:13–15). Jerusalem will be exalted and the centre of the new creation (60:4–22; 61:4–9; 65:17–25; p. 3). Lessing further sets out his own aims. These include a desire to investigate the literary, theological, and canonical function of the text and to read it with Jesus's life, death, and resurrection as its focal point (p. 25). In short, what is the *Sitz in der Literatur* of a given text within the book of Isaiah and within the Protestant canon?

In the rest of the introduction, Lessing discusses some general aspects of Isa 56–66. First, after a fairly cursory summary of historical-critical theories pertaining to the gradual growth of Isa 56–66, Lessing advocates Isaianic authorship of the entire book of Isaiah on the basis of the superscription in Isa 1:1 and the references to Isaiah in Rom 10:20. The problem here is a matter of methodology. If you choose to engage in historical questions, you need to interact with historical-critical theories, either accepting or refuting the various arguments. If, however, you choose to read the text in its current canonical form and to focus on its theological message, authorship (Isaianic or otherwise) does not matter. Given that Lessing declares his belief that the prophecies in Isa 56–66 stem from God (p. 10), it might have been preferable to leave aside the question of authorship.

Lessing then turns to the relationship between Isa 40–55 and Isa 56–66 and argues for the two parts to be “intricately connected by means of the overarching thematic development of Isaiah.” Following primarily Shalom Paul, Lessing highlights the shared thematic and lexical links. Again, I detect a certain methodological confusion. The distinction between Isa 40–55 and Isa 56–66 is largely a historical-critical construct with which readers of the canonical text do not need to concern themselves. As above, Lessing could thus have limited his discussion to the theological continuity in the extant form of Isaiah. As Lessing states, “the inspired book is divinely intended to be read as a whole” (p. 20).

The same critique is true also for the next section on the historical background of Isa 56–66. Why discuss this topic at all, if as Lessing maintains, “Isaiah 56–66 asks us to bracket out historical questions” (p. 23)? The type of Christ-centred, canonical approach that Lessing advocates does not need to locate the message of Isa 56–66 in history. Lessing is offering a theological reading of Isa 56–66 and that is good. Furthermore, the choice between historical-critical scholarship and theological scholarship is not a matter of either-or; they can coexist as they explore different questions.

Lessing then explores the conflict between the protagonists and the antagonists evident in Isa 56–66. Lessing interprets it “as a vision oriented towards the painful break between Judaism and Christianity that is narrated in the NT.” In this sense, the debate in Isa 56–66 foreshadows the discussion about who is part of the “new Israel” in Rom 9–11; Gal 3; and Phil 3. Likewise, the ingathering of the Gentiles in Isa 56:1–8 and 66:18–21 points forward to the message of the NT which seeks to incorporate both Jews and Gentiles in the new Christian community. The final section in the introduction is devoted to the structure of Isa 56–66 and the arrangement of the individual oracles into a chiasmic design, centred around what Lessing calls “the fifth Servant Song” (Isa 61:1–3).

Turning to the actual commentary, Lessing divides the text of Isa 56–66 into three major sections: Isa 56–59, 60–62, and 63–66. Each are then subdivided into smaller pericopes. This division follows the consensus with few exceptions. For example, Isa 56:1–8 is treated as a textual unit, followed by Isa 56:9–57:21. Likewise, Isa 63:1–6 and Isa 63:7–64:11 are discussed separately. More unusually, Isa 66:1–6 and Isa 66:7–24 are interpreted as two distinct units (versus the tendency to differentiate between 66:1–17 and 66:18–24).

Each subsection opens with Lessing’s own translation, followed by extensive textual notes, which explain matters of grammar as well as key words and concepts. In these notes, Lessing interacts with the ancient versions and sometimes opts to deviate from the Masoretic Text

in favour of another version. For instance, his translation of Isa 57:17 follows the temporal aspects of the Septuagint.

Lessing then offers a theologically focused commentary where he discusses the structure of the pericope as well as its theological significance within Isa 56-66, the book of Isaiah, and the Protestant canon as a whole. For example, how is a theological theme employed in a given pericope, and how does it relate to the other occurrences of the same theme elsewhere in the Bible? Lessing devotes much thought to each individual verse and in most instances connects its message to the preaching in the New Testament. The commentary concludes with a summary of the canonical message of the pericope and reflections. The latter section functions almost as an excursus as it singles out one aspect of the pericope's message and expands on it. For example, the reflections on Isa 56:1-8 and Isa 58:1-14 focus, as one might expect, on the Sabbath, while Isa 56:9-57:21 looks at pride and humility. Other topics are more unexpected. For example, rather than looking at the role of lament in Christian worship, the reflections following Isa 63:7-64:11 explore the notion of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

The commentary uses a set of 15 icons which are placed in the margins throughout the commentary. They are used to highlight themes such as the Trinity, the Passion, Christology, and the Eucharist. They may be useful to some readers, but I found myself flipping the pages back to the key (pp. xix-xx) to verify their meaning.

On the whole, this is a useful commentary to pastors and other people involved in preaching and teaching the Bible in a Christian context. At the same time, the reader needs to be aware of the inherent danger of this type of commentary where the message of the original text to the people of Israel is overshadowed and in some cases also replaced by its canonical meaning. In my view, a historical reading and a Christian reading of a text in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament are complementary rather than at odds with one another. The canonical meaning of the Old Testament as directed to the church does not replace the meaning of the Hebrew Bible to the Jews.

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*The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul* edited by Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard Jr. Chicago: Moody, 2013. 288 pp., US \$26.99, softcover.

The core of this volume consists of papers originally delivered at the Evangelical Theological Society's Psalms and Hebrew Poetry Consultation (2009–2011). Several additional essays were added, bringing the total number of chapters to nineteen. The authors form a veritable who's who of evangelical scholarship, many of whom have made significant contributions to Psalter studies. The book, then, promises much. Its stated purpose is fourfold: (1) to "celebrate" the impact of the psalms on Christian faith, (2) to highlight current trends in scholarship, (3) to explore key theological, literary and canonical themes, and (4) to provide a tool for pastors and professors (pp. 15–16).

*The Psalms* is divided into five parts. The first concerns psalms studies in the twenty-first century. Insights proffered draw weight from the calibre of the contributors. Examples include Bruce K. Waltke's "Biblical Theology of the Psalms Today," Willem A. VanGerner's "Entering the Textual World of the Psalms," and C. Hassell Bullock's "The Psalms and Faith/Tradition." Each presents a mix of personal reflection, an assessment of the current *milieu*, and thoughts regarding avenues for future research.

Part 2 focuses in on psalms of praise; the essays are primarily exegetical in nature. Francis X. Kimmitt exegetes Ps 46 before making extended comments regarding praise in contemporary Christian worship. This is followed by an exploration of mythopoeic imagery in Robert B. Chisholm's "Suppressing Myth: Yahweh and the Sea in the Praise Psalms." A third essay by Andrew J. Schmutzer, "Psalm 91: Refuge, Protection, and Their Use in the New Testament," attempts what he terms "multiplex" interpretation (p. 85). In doing so, he helpfully provides a worked example of how to blend multiple considerations (literary context, canonical placement, structural analysis, etc.) in order to arrive at a "thick" description of Ps 91. Schmutzer follows his exegesis with an intriguing exploration of the psalm's Jewish and Christian reception history.

Part 3 is the longest section. Its five essays explore another central, yet often neglected, genre: the lament. Michael E. Travers's essay, "'Severe Delight': The Paradox of Praise in Confession of Sin," looks at Pss 32 and 51 and questions notes of praise in these psalms of confession. In a similar vein, Daniel J. Estes looks more broadly at the movement from lament to praise evident in many individual laments, concluding that meditation upon God—on his character, past deeds, word, etc.—is the critical catalyst for the transformation of mood from

pain to praise (p. 162). Allen P. Ross takes a closer look at the language used in lament psalms. In particular, he mines the “Thou” sections to tease out factors that instigate appeal to God in situations of strife. The result is a helpful compendium of the various stances taken by the psalmists. Two further chapters round out this section. Walter C. Kaiser’s “The Laments of Lamentations Compared to the Psalter” engages another canonical perspective on lament. The final chapter by Randall X. Gauthier presents a detailed text-critical investigation of LXX Ps 54 in which he gives fascinating insight into the range of possible translation motives displayed by those responsible for the Old Greek Psalter.

The book’s fourth section takes a step back to consider a major development in psalms studies in the last 30 years, namely, the canonical shaping of the Psalter. The opening essay by Robert L. Cole focuses attention on the introductory function of Pss 1 and 2. His essay contains a helpful elucidation of some of the lacunae bequeathed to scholarship by form-criticism (pp. 184–85, 193–95), as well as mapping a better way forward. David M. Howard Jr. then examines the interplay between human and divine kingship as a possible organisational motif for the Psalter. The remaining two chapters focus on Book V. Michael K. Snearly examines the role of the king in Pss 107–150 and attempts to throw light on the editorial purposes behind the collection. The chapter by Tremper Longman III, “From Weeping to Rejoicing: Psalm 150 as the Conclusion to the Psalter,” forms a nice *inclusio* with Cole’s essay and is suggestive regarding the role played by the Psalter’s final psalm.

Finally, part 5 tackles the communication of the psalms in contemporary preaching. Rather than doing this via abstracted principles, four example sermons are presented: Mark D. Futato on Pss 16 and 23, David A. Ridder on Ps 84, David M. Howard Jr. on Ps 88, and John Piper on Ps 117.

*The Psalms*, as might be expected, is full of exegetical gold. Its authors utilise their interpretative experience to draw out many fascinating aspects of the psalms under discussion. Readers will benefit from sitting at the feet of learned expositors. Moreover, several chapters provide a model of exegetical praxis that students of the psalms would do well to emulate. Furthermore, key insights derived from the last century of psalms studies are presented in an accessible form that will aid greatly those seeking either an introduction to the field or a survey of recent developments, and, more importantly, *why* and *how* these developments are significant.

At the same time, however, there is a notable lack of consistency across the volume as a whole. Some of this, no doubt, is to be expected in a collection of individual essays which had their genesis as conference

papers. Yet while one can cope with, for instance, consecutive chapters differing in the identification of the figures of Ps 2 (chs. 12, 13), other variance reflects editorial inconsistency. Original languages are sometimes transliterated—in both general purpose (e.g., p. 222) and academic (e.g., p. 139) styles—and sometimes not (e.g., p. 84). While translation is often provided, this is not always the case (e.g., p. 78). Moreover, in addition to Hebrew, Greek and Latin script, ch. 11 also contains untransliterated Syriac and Coptic. It is thus unclear as to what level of proficiency is being assumed for readers, as well as corresponding implications regarding their ability to grasp and follow the contours of the arguments presented. Potential difficulty is not helped by the reversal of Hebrew script on some pages (e.g., pp. 154–55).

Related to this editorial inconsistency is a wide variance in pitch. Walter Kaiser's essay on Lamentations (by its topic already somewhat odd in a volume dedicated to the psalms) represents one end of the spectrum. His chapter is short (only seven pages) and is written at an introductory level. Randall Gauthier's essay, on the other hand, while not the longest in the book, is highly technical and full of specialised terminology. Again, it is difficult to discern who the intended audience is. In relation to Gauthier's chapter, one can easily imagine appreciative nods from specialists but furrowed brows from non-specialists.

In sum, *The Psalms* is a somewhat uneven, yet nevertheless commendable, collection of *individual* essays. That said, it is also a showcase of erudite evangelical scholarship and is full of valuable insights for those who can access them. While my students will find some of the material hard going, this title will definitely be on their reading list next semester.

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*A Prophet Like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* by Jeffrey Stackert. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 256 pp., US \$74.00, hardcover.

Jeffrey Stackert, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible at the University of Chicago Divinity School (Ph.D., Brandeis University), developed the foundation for this book in his essay “Mosaic Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic Source of the Torah” (*Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, Hexateuch, and the Deuteronomistic History* [ed. Konrad Schmid and Raymond F. Person Jr.; FAT 56; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012]). In the

present work, Stackert begins by clearly outlining his line of inquiry. First, what are we to make of the Torah's various portrayals of Mosaic prophecy? Second, what are the implications that they carry for the reconstruction of the relationship between law and prophecy in Israelite religion? Thankfully, he spends a brief, but adequate, amount of time covering the influence that nineteenth-century Pentateuchal scholarship has had on reconstructions of Israelite religion during the last two centuries. Stackert agrees with much recent scholarship that the "evolutionary" model of Israelite religion (from Former Prophets to Torah, or prophetic spontaneity to legal rigidity) is inadequate and must be set aside (pp. 2–19). In this same vein, he chides the separation of the Torah and the Former Prophets in scholarly treatments of the development of Israelite religion—a separation encouraged by canonical categories rather than historical inquiry.

Stackert goes on to define and defend his method of reading the literary portrayals of Mosaic prophecy in the Torah—the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis. Though many current Pentateuchal scholars may disagree with the claims of this method, Stackert spends an ample amount of space explaining and defending the approach so that the rest of his study may be understood clearly (pp. 19–26). He makes no effort to conceal his approach to the text. Finally, Stackert explains that his study is primarily concerned with the literary portrayal of prophecy and law within the Pentateuchal sources and the implications of these portrayals for the reconstruction of Israelite religion. He undertakes this literary study with the tools of recent archaeological evidence as well as an adept understanding of ANE literature and culture. Stackert contends that the ideological views of the authors of the sources concerning prophecy and law are relayed within their portrayal of Moses as prophet and lawgiver. Furthermore, it is these politically driven viewpoints that Stackert intends to reconstruct from a careful reading of the texts for the purpose of reconstructing the sources' perspectives on prophecy, law, and the proper relationship between the two. (pp. 27–31)

In chapter 2, and against recent arguments to the contrary, Stackert argues that each of the Torah sources depicts Moses as a prophet and describes prophetic aspects of his vocation. He spends the chapter exploring and demonstrating the call, mode of operation, and legitimization of Moses's prophetic vocation in J, E, and P (pp. 36–69). He demonstrates their similarities to ANE depictions of prophetic practice as well as their similarities to other depictions of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Yet he is careful to nuance the differences in the portrayals, whether differences from ANE sources or differences among the Torah sources themselves, both in mode of operation and legitimation. Such attention is paid to nuancing because, according to



Stackert, it is in these differences that the political and religious ideologies of the authors' shine through (p. 39).

In the following three chapters, Stackert utilizes the Neo-Documentary method to reconstruct the J, E, D, and P sources. He then carefully investigates the ideological views of these sources with respect to prophecy and law. His chapter on E is particularly interesting, as he not only reconstructs an independent E source but also claims that the E source is the most stringent in its anti-prophetic ideology (pp. 70–73, 123–25). This assertion goes against the grain of the consensus, which often views E as a source congenial to prophetic practices. If Stackert's reconstruction of the E source and its narrative order are accepted, then it is hard to ignore his argument that E's political agenda in history writing is the nullification and replacement of prophecy by Mosaic law. (Although his arguments may at times seem radical, it must be noted that he stays true to the method that he espouses.) Furthermore, if this claim and his dating of the E source (the classical dating) is accepted, then Stackert makes a strong case against developmental views of Israelite religion. Even as he concedes that there were social segments that preferred law to prophecy, he demonstrates that these dissenting ideological agendas (prophecy vs. law and those in between) existed together rather than in some developmental continuum, hence the reason why polemical historiography, such as the E source, was necessary.

After reconstructing the E source and its political/religious ideology, Stackert examines D to determine its stance on law and prophecy. He investigates D texts that reuse and reinterpret E (e.g., Deut 1:9–18; 5; 13:2–6; and 18:15–22). With an examination of narrative context in D and comparison to E, Stackert contends that D attempts to reverse E's complete elimination of prophecy after Moses. However, he argues that D attempts to retain E's emphasis on law and E's suspicion of prophetic innovation (pp. 126–28, 165–67). D pays respect to and is influenced by E's arguments even as it realizes the impracticality of its stance toward prophecy (and so sets about to revise it in the spirit of E). Each of the scenes in D that Stackert examines portrays this reinter-pretive movement.

As for P and J, Stackert argues that these sources differ from E and D in their silence concerning the relationship between prophecy and law (pp. 168–69). P, in this silence, condemns prophecy. No possible future for prophetic activity is allowed. For one, P fails to legislate any material concerning prophecy and its correct practice, while at the same time condemning any action taken contrary to or not provided for in the legal material (e.g., the unlicensed actions of Nadab and Abihu in Lev 10:1–2). Second, P does not follow E and D in making Moses the prophetic archetype. Rather, P depicts Moses's prophetic inspiration as

necessary only for the founding of the cult. The cult and the priesthood then stands in the place of Moses and prophetic communication as the only legitimate form of communication and interaction with the deity. For these reasons, Stackert argues that P denies prophecy any place in Israelite religion with both historical and legal claims (pp. 170–90). On the other hand, J provides a helpful contrasting voice to the other sources. J's narrative portrays Moses as a prophetic leader just as the other sources do, but it does not make any argument concerning the correct relationship of prophecy and law. Rather, according to Stackert, J does not consider a legislated relationship at all. In Stackert's view, this source's lack of discourse against either prophecy or law assists the critic in highlighting these themes of contention in the other sources (p. 191).

With this monograph, Stackert provides both a reaffirmation and a critique of earlier scholarship on the Pentateuch and the history of Israelite religion. With a critical literary evaluation of the sources of the Pentateuch, Stackert claims that the developmental argument (prophecy succeeded by legislation) holds true for some sources. However, he contends that the ideological narratives of E, D, and P are expressions of religious imagination or ideal contending against other forms of Israelite religion. This is contrasted with J's lack of engagement or acknowledgment of their arguments. Stackert calls for a recognition that Israelite religious history consisted of "a complex, religiously heterogeneous social matrix" (p. 199). Although many Pentateuchal scholars may disagree with Stackert's choice to employ a source-critical approach, it is necessary to note (despite general arguments over the method) that Stackert remains true to the method. If any criticism is to be directed to Stackert, it must engage with the "Neo-Documentary" approach itself, not with his utilization of the method. The only place where the reader may be left desiring more is in Stackert's engagement with the text as "political allegory" (pp. 28–31). Perhaps due to issues of space and economizing, Stackert only directly addresses this facet of his approach in less than four pages of his introduction. Throughout the monograph, his understanding of the source texts as political and/or religious ideology and allegory resurfaces, but it is usually only in his concluding remarks about the source narratives and their viewpoints. Unfortunately, his assessments about each source's political and/or religious ideology and employment of narrative as allegory are not brought together in his conclusion in the same comprehensive way as his other arguments. This is a disappointment primarily because this facet is one of the most tantalizing aspects of the monograph. However, his overall approach and methodology is clearly laid out from the beginning. The lack of further exploration concerning narrative as political and/or religious allegory may be contributed to a desire to front his primary arguments concerning

past scholarship's shortcomings in its understanding of the development of prophecy and law within ancient Israelite religion. Thus, Stackert has provided yet another voice to the ever-evolving field known as Pentateuchal studies.

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*Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107–150* by W. Dennis Tucker Jr. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014. xii + 227 pp., US \$43.95, softcover.

W. Dennis Tucker Jr. is currently an Associate Professor of Christian Scripture at the Truett Seminary at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Prior to that, he taught at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Tucker's works on the Psalms include *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), co-edited with Joel Burnett and William Bellinger and *The Psalter as Witness: The Theology of the Psalter* (Baylor University Press, 2015). *Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107–150* is one of the most recent monographs on Book V of the Psalter. Here, Tucker discusses how the texts of the Psalter deconstruct the power ideologies promulgated by the Achaemenid Empire on one hand, and construct a counter ideology of YHWH's kingship on the other.

Tucker contextualizes his work by bringing together two recent conversations in Psalms research. First, he draws on anti-imperial concepts in Book V raised by E. Ballhorn and E. Zenger (pp. 9–10) and then feeds them into the second conversation, which is a socio-ideological one. It is within this framework that he reads the Psalter.

Tucker defines a Persian "imperial ideology" in three ways. First, the Persian king is to rule with universal dominance, rule, and reach (pp. 28–29). Second, this rule is one that embraces a joyous participation of its vassals instead of harsh subjugation (p. 34). Third, the Achaemenid Empire is to be defined by cosmic order and harmony (p. 41). With supporting evidences, Tucker claims that these Achaemenid ideologies were indeed propagated, known, and understood throughout the Empire (pp. 41; 47).

Tucker spends the next few chapters analyzing the various collections in Book V of the Psalter, showing how the texts subvert these imperial ideologies. For example, Tucker argues that the term, "distress" (צַר, Ps 107:2; 6; 13; 19; 28), is likely to be read as hostile "oppressors"

(p. 65). The term, “nations” (גוים), is also important in Tucker’s analysis. Its use in the Davidic collection (Pss 108–10) speaks of “Israel’s struggle against hostile nations” (p. 68). Tucker surmises that the opening Davidic collection and the Hallel Psalms (Pss 108–110; 113–18), in general, maintain a negative assessment of the empires and nations.

The Psalms of Ascents “may have been nationalized in an effort to address political threats faced by those who prayed the psalms” (p. 96). Psalms 135 and 136 are also critiques of foreign powers that had induced chaos and instability, and functioned as “obstacles” for Israel to enjoy her inheritance (p. 119). Psalm 137 is yet another reminder of the current threats that Israel was experiencing in view of the past (pp. 122–23).

The above deconstruction of imperial ideologies is made vis-à-vis a construction of YHWH’s power and his rule over Israel. Tucker highlights how this is done through the Zion tradition. When the Temple and Jerusalem fell, the theological claims of Zion’s “inviolability” (Pss 46:5; 48:1–3) were reinterpreted by Israel. YHWH now rules as “God of the heavens”, and dispenses his blessings from Mount Zion (p. 142). This is manifested in texts such as Pss 113:5–6; 123:1; 115:3; 128:4, 5; 129:8; 132:15; 133:3; 136:26; 144:5–7. Another view of “constructing power” in Book V is by reclaiming the notion of YHWH’s power in creation. However, the clearest challenge to the Persian ideologies in Book V is the claims of YHWH’s kingship (p. 158). Tucker points out that Psalm 145 and the final Hallel (Pss 146–150) present a kingdom of YHWH that seeks to overturn all earthly kingdoms.

Tucker’s thesis, as a whole, can be viewed in two main sections. The first argues that Book V of the Psalter deconstructs the ideologies of the Persian Empire. The second argues how Book V constructs YHWH’s sovereign rule over his people Israel. It is YHWH, not Ahuramazda the Persian deity, who creates the world and rules with order. It is YHWH, whose compassion and justice bring about an orderly and joyful life.

Tucker’s work is a mixture of diachronic and synchronic analyses. Methodologically, he first postulates a socio-historical backdrop by means of a diachronic analysis and complements it with a synchronic reading. In approaching Tucker’s work, one must first consider two levels of assumption. On one level, one has to deal with Tucker’s understanding and reconstruction of the historiography in Book V. On another, one must also wrestle with the reconstructed *ideologies* based on the evidence presented.

While Tucker claims that Book V addresses primarily a Persian ideology (p. 16), many of his arguments are read through the general term, “foreign nations.” By the evidence he presents, it is clear that Egyptian ideologies are also in view in Book V (p. 108). I am not sure if

Tucker can sustain a distinct Persian ideology in Book V, or needs to. Notably, Tucker has also skipped about half of the total number of psalms in Book V in his discussions.

I believe that one has to sustain an argument of how Book V relates to Books I–IV in the Psalter in some way. This is crucial because many of the themes in Book V that Tucker has raised (e.g., YHWH’s kingship and foreign enemies) are also found in the earlier books of the Psalter which may not have been written under foreign imperialistic regime. The question is why are these themes in Book V alone singled out for deconstructing the Achaemenid ideologies? Despite these limitations, Tucker’s work is a helpful contribution to the research on the shape of the Psalter. His work will be well received by those interested in studying the Psalter under the Persian period. Tucker has identified a plausible socio-ideological setting through which Book V can be read and provided new and helpful puzzle pieces in search of the elusive setting of the Psalter.

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*The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary* by Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. xv + 312 pp., US \$28.00, softcover.

This is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the book of Psalms, particularly those focused on lament. Bruce Waltke’s reputation precedes him. He is Professor Emeritus at Regent College, and his contributions to the volume principally appear in the exegetical sections. James Houston is also Professor Emeritus at Regent. He provides the historical commentary and profiles of each interpreter throughout the volume. Erika Moore is Professor of Old Testament at Trinity School for Ministry. Her contributions include the exegetical portion of Ps 39 as well as the editorial glue for the whole volume.

Their work amounts to a second book in a series of “historical commentary” on the Psalms, but one which is able to stand on its own. The first volume, *The Psalms as Christian Worship* (Eerdmans, 2010) included a thorough introduction to the history of Psalm interpretation (some 112 pp.), as well as commentary on Pss 1–4, 8, 15, 16, 19, 22, 23, 51, 110, and 139. Pulling from different genres, it provided a well-rounded view of how the Psalms were both understood and incorporated into Christian life and practice throughout the ages. Much like that first

volume, in this volume the authors offer commentary on individual psalms while drawing on various pastoral voices of lament throughout Christian history. Their stated reason for doing so is to “recover the spiritual ends of the patristic commentators” (p. 46), but through the plain sense of Scripture rather than allegorical language.

Instead of choosing psalms formally defined as laments in the modern context, they selected the penitential psalms (Pss 6; 32; 38; 102; 130; 143). In addition, Pss 5, 7, 39, and 44 were chosen. For the contributors, a Christian theology of lament does not begin by distinguishing praise psalms from lament psalms, but is built from “a basic human posture of our finitude, of our sinful nature, of our need of redemption, of our trust and communion with God, all in the light of God’s purpose for humanity to be created and destined in the *imago dei*” (p. xi). Thus, while they admit that their choice of psalms might appear counter-intuitive, part of their goal is to highlight how differently our understanding of lament may be from earlier interpreters. In doing so, their approach is theological rather critical.

Following a brief prologue and introductory chapter on Christian lament, the volume devotes each remaining chapter to the selected psalms. Each chapter takes the same four-part shape: (1) the voice of church, in which one primary voice from the church is summarized, (2) the voice of the psalmist, where a translation and text-critical notes are offered for the psalm, (3) commentary, including both introduction and exegesis, and (4) a conclusion, drawing together these strands. Closing the book is a helpful glossary of key terms, as well as indices of authors, subjects, and references. Surprisingly, there is no bibliography. One might have expected at least a listing of primary sources or recommended secondary readings (this was also sadly missing from their first volume).

Reading through the prologue and introduction, one gets a sense that they are frustrated by elements of the contemporary discussion. In agreement with many, they note that the church has lost its ability to lament both corporately and individually, and how this affects the pastoral ministry. “[W]e cannot express our solidarity with . . . those in the depths of despair and darkest desolation” (p. 2). At the same time, they equally bemoan aspects of the contemporary attempt to revive lament in the church. Much of their ammunition is aimed at Brueggemann and his students, whose basic approach is “a revolt against biblical orthodoxy in that it provides a psychological alternative” (p. 4). For the authors, lament in the Psalms is not protest; the “I AM” cannot and should not be reduced “to a god whose sense of social justice is being questioned like an accused criminal in the dock” (p. 3). Rather, lament is prayer to God, a confession in which “the sufferer seeks to

share his suffering with God and with hope of deliverance” (p. 7). The result of lament is not a listing of accusations against God, but “a deeper trust and more perceptive knowledge gained” (p. 10). Their aim, then, is to provide an alternative contemporary model of lament built up from biblical expressions and a theological anthropology, achieved in concert with the pastoral voices of yesteryear (the “historical” part of the commentary).

Are they successful? In the prologue, they note that the selection of earlier interpreters was not aimed at comprehensiveness, but at providing vignettes illustrating pastoral theology at different points in church history (p. xiv). Sometimes this is done very well. For example, the summary of Gregory of Nyssa with Ps 6 stands out. However, at other points this is left undeveloped. For example, the discussion of Jerome with Ps 5 is rather lackluster. All in all, however, they allow the various voices (Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Erasmus, Calvin, Luther, etc.) to help inform their own exegesis of the selected psalms. Beyond the missing bibliography, there is also a lack of a concluding chapter to tie the book together. The introduction prepares the reader well for the chapters ahead, but a conclusion looking back and finishing that introduction would be a fitting addition. They leave that work to the reader. There are some other legitimate concerns, such as the employment of Waltke's alternative view of the superscriptions, or their all-too-simple distinction between the old and new dispensations. Yet these should not take away from the volume's great contribution. At the very least, it is another reminder of how valuable the history of interpretation can be for contemporary scholarship.

I would recommend the volume to scholars, students, and church leaders alike, but it may be a bit too much for the average layperson. I am unsure if more volumes in this series are forthcoming, but if so, I look forward to them.

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*Yahweh's Council: Its Structure and Membership* by Ellen White. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 65. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014. xxii + 223 pp., US \$109, hardcover.

The divine council has received considerable academic attention in recent years. This study is an expansion of her 2012 doctoral dissertation at St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto. While points of the

review that follows are negative, readers should know that this reviewer considers the book a worthwhile contribution.

The author provides a readable overview of the phenomenon of an assembly of divine beings (gods and otherwise in the author's parlance) in the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 1 provides a summary of previous scholarship and the author's methodology. With respect to the latter, the author outlines her criteria for what qualifies as a divine council scene: terminology (e.g., סוד, קהל, בני האלהים, צבא השמים) and council motifs (e.g., the divine courtroom). White also imposes a limiting criterion on her study: only passages that shed light on council membership receive focused attention. The result is that *Yahweh's Council* considers only the following passages in significant detail: 1 Kgs 22, Isa 6, Job 1–2, Zech 3, and Dan 7.

The author's second chapter examines the above criteria and therefore serves as a justification for excluding Ps 82 and Deut 32 from her membership-structural analysis and conclusions. While the exclusion of these two passages might create the impression that White seeks to avoid taking a position on the debate over whether YHWH or some other deity was head of Israel's heavenly council in these two passages, this is not the case. White clearly aligns herself with the preponderant view, asserting that Ps 82 and Deut 32 "represent a council under the authority of a God other than Yahweh" (p. 20). As a scholar who has published a contrarian understanding of this majority perspective, this reviewer will return to this issue below.

Chapters 3–7 concern themselves with the list of passages produced via the author's criteria. White offers her own translations and relevant points of exegesis in chapter 3 ("Exegetical Issues in Council of Yahweh Texts"). She then moves on to "Council Members and Their Functions" in chapter 4. It is noteworthy that she includes divine actors that are often neglected in council discussions (e.g., "Those Standing Here" and "Interpreting Persona") as well as human beings who see or interact with the council. The data of chapter 4 are fodder for chapter 5 ("Synchronic Analysis"), and it is this chapter that puts forth White's real contribution to divine council research. Chapter 6 ("Diachronic Analysis") attempts to date the texts yielded by the author's methodological approach. Chapter 7 consists of a concluding summary.

The value of White's volume is twofold. First, *Yahweh's Council* introduces readers who are new to the study of the divine council to the major passages and interpretive issues. While there are fine dictionary-length summaries of the divine council, White's overview offers more detail in a number of respects, especially council participants. For example, she devotes considerable attention to השטן, thereby introducing readers to a range of interpretive quandaries usually explored elsewhere.



Yet breadth is also the enemy of depth. While White capably gives readers the lay of the land when encountering the divine council, other published treatments (e.g., Mark S. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2001], 41–66) are still required reading to fill gaps in White's portrayal.

White moves beyond survey in chapter 5, where she offers a new perspective on the structure of, and hierarchical relationships within, the divine council. She writes (p. 138):

I propose a new understanding of the council structure that will be based completely on the function of characters themselves because of the difficulty regarding identity. This is also a reflection of the royal court of ancient Israel where members would engage in various roles, both administrative and judicial. Thus some characters may fit into more than one category of membership. The structure also determines degrees of membership or agency within the Council of Yahweh.

The wording obscures clarity, but the thought is nevertheless significant. One is either an insider or outsider to an institution, hence the idea “degrees of membership” is awkward. Rather, White is referring to status within the group of which one is a member. Her observation that status may be fluid depending on agency makes good sense in this reviewer's judgment. Other scholars have noted how divine council language includes the vocabulary of administrative tasks (e.g., מלאך) and the royal court (דין). However, usefulness (and thus importance) of an administrative agent can fluctuate with circumstance and skill set. There is no coherent reason to assume that writers familiar with such transparent earthly bureaucratic realities would be resistant or incapable of employing them in expressing YHWH's rule in the spiritual world. However, White mistakenly relegates the מלאך יהוה to a low-tier status purely on the basis of the term מלאך (p. 141), apparently forgetting both her own admission on page 125 that the מלאך יהוה and יהוה may be interchangeable and recent scholarship that contributes to such an approach (e.g., Esther J. Hamori, “When Gods Were Men”: *The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* [BZAW; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008]). Her labeling of השטן as an “advisor” is odd (p. 141) as השטן nowhere advises YHWH. Rather, he reports and challenges YHWH's assessment of Job. Despite these idiosyncrasies, White's thinking in chapter 5 is fresh and therefore welcome, whether one would embrace the author's conceptions of council structuring or not.

The innovative insight of ch. 5 is unfortunately offset by the propensity of the author to uncritically embrace consensus thinking elsewhere. Accepting that Ps 82 and Deut 32:8–9 should be read as indicating YHWH's subordination to another deity is one case in point. In her discussion of these two passages, White notes a handful of exegetical counter-arguments to this perspective (pp. 26–41) and correctly references the reviewer's dissertation and one journal article ("Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible," *BBR* 18.1 [2008]: 1–30.) as disputing such a conclusion. Nevertheless, her treatment is inadequate.

In addition, the writer's conclusion that the divine council alludes to a polytheistic background, which is created through a consideration of plural אלהים, the council itself, and the belief that stripping the gods of immortality in Ps 82:7 was prompted by a monotheistic breakthrough, is not new. Nowhere does White deal with evidence to the contrary of this evolution, such as the nearly 180 occurrences of divine plurality language in the much later Qumran material, many of which are in explicit divine council contexts (see Michael S. Heiser, "Monotheism and the Language of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls," *TynB* 65.1 [2014]: 85–100, which is missing from White's bibliography). White overlooked other important sources with regard to her treatment of YHWH's subordination in Ps 82. For example, David Frankel's *JHS* article on Ps 82 articulates the consensus view of YHWH's subordination with clarity (see David Frankel, "El as the Speaking Voice in Psalm 82:6–8," *JHS* 10 art. 16 (2010): 2–24). This reviewer offered a detailed rebuttal to Frankel's points and the broader argumentation for seeing YHWH and El as distinct deities in this journal ("Does Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible Demonstrate an Evolution from Polytheism to Monotheism in Israelite Religion?" *JESOT* 1.1 [2012]: 1–24). Both are also missing from White's bibliography.

Despite these shortcomings, YHWH's Council deserves attention on the part of all those interested in the divine council and, more broadly, the discussion of Yahwism in Israelite religion.

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