



I N S I D E

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Revisiting the Wheaton Theology Conference 2000—Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect, a new volume from IVP.

A Christian Consensus?

IVP editor Gary Deddo was able to catch author Roger Olson for an interview about his new book, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity*, just before his semester of teaching at Truett Theological Seminary really got rolling.

DEDDO: Roger, many readers have appreciated your earlier book *The Story of Christian Theology*. Your newest book, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, has just been released. The former falls within the category of historical theology. Some might expect the later to be a systematic or dogmatic theology. How would you compare and contrast the two books?

OLSON: Whereas I'm glad to count *The Story of Christian Theology* as a work of historical theology, I'm not particularly anxious for *The Mosaic of Christian Belief* to be considered systematic or dogmatic theology. I'd prefer to think of it as an account of the Christian consensus regarding the content of our faith. While there's a pattern to the book, there's no system to it, and I try to avoid being what most people think of as dogmatic. *The Mosaic of Christian Belief* treats many of the same subjects as *The Story of*

Christian Theology but in a different manner. The new book is arranged topically rather than chronologically and features not so much people as ideas shared by all or most of the great Christian teachers of history.

DEDDO: How does your approach compare to Tom Oden's or others? What exactly do you mean by "consensual Christianity"?

OLSON: I hesitate to name other theologians because they may not appreciate my characterizations of their influence on my own thinking, but if I had to name one person whose work has influenced my own account, it would be Donald Bloesch. I regard consensual Christianity as the normative but not authoritative consensus of the churches throughout time.

I have to admit, of course, that for me this consensus includes a "Protestant spin" on the doctrine of salvation. These matters of belief are pretty much



Roger Olson

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Pentateuchal Studies Today

IVP has now published four New Testament dictionaries, each focused on a specific facet of New Testament study: Jesus and the Gospels, Paul and his letters, the "later" New Testament (and its post-apostolic developments) and New Testament background. Around IVP and within the book trade these have become known as the "Black Dictionaries" after their distinctive black covers. Well, the Black Dictionaries are now being extended into the Old Testament, and the first of these volumes—the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*—is about to be released. (Future volumes will cover the historical books, wisdom and poetry writings, and the prophets—and, if all goes well, a volume on Old Testament background. Dan Reid, IVP's in-house director of this growing ensemble, recently discussed the project—and the current state and challenges of Pentateuchal study—with Desmond Alexander and David Baker, the editors of the DOTP.

REID: If a DOTP had been done in 1962, perhaps as a Tyndale House project, what are some notable ways in which it would have differed from the DOTP of 2002?

ALEXANDER: Well, one obvious difference is that David and I would not have been the editors! At that time I was probably struggling to master my 5 times tables. More seriously, I think the editors would have struggled greatly to find a sufficient number of evangelical scholars to produce articles on the Pentateuch. In this regard things have changed considerably over the past forty years. I also think that a 1962 dictionary would not have contained some of the topics that play a more significant role in biblical studies today, and in general, the whole work would have been overshadowed much more by the Documentary Hypothesis.

BAKER: In 1962 the questions, and therefore the



David Baker

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settled, but we have to be open to correction even here if Scripture requires it. So I don't invest the same authority in the Great Tradition as in Scripture itself. Nevertheless, people who call themselves Christian should know and respect and confess the beliefs carved out by great Christian thinkers over two millennia unless they have very good reasons—from God's original revelation—for doing otherwise.

My favored analogy is to the history of federal and supreme court interpretations of the U.S. Constitution. The interpretations do not have the same authority as the constitution, but they do possess a certain normativity. In technical language, Scripture is our *norma normans* (norming norm), whereas the consensual teaching tradition of the church is our *norma normata* (normed norm).

DEDDO: Christians from time to time have gone in for literal mosaics in a big way. How does the idea of a mosaic inform this particular project?

OLSON: I must give credit here to Stanley Grenz, who used the image of a mosaic for the complex of Christian beliefs; he graciously allowed me to borrow the analogy. In *The Mosaic of Christian Belief* I treat the teachings of Christianity as a multifaceted unity: there is a unified picture of God (for example, as triune and omnipotent) and a fascinating diversity within that picture. Some Christians interpret the Trinity one way; others interpret it another way. As with a mosaic, one can focus on either the many colors (diversity of interpretation) or the one picture (unity of confession); I prefer to enjoy both.

DEDDO: At the beginning of the book you suggest the need for a "both-and" theology. Could you clue our readers in on what you are getting at with that phrase? How does it represent what you're attempting to accomplish?

OLSON: So many books of doctrine and theology treat a controversial topic as if there can be only one point of view that is faithful to God's revelation. Often this leads to neglect of another point of view about the same subject that is also faithful to God's Word. For example,

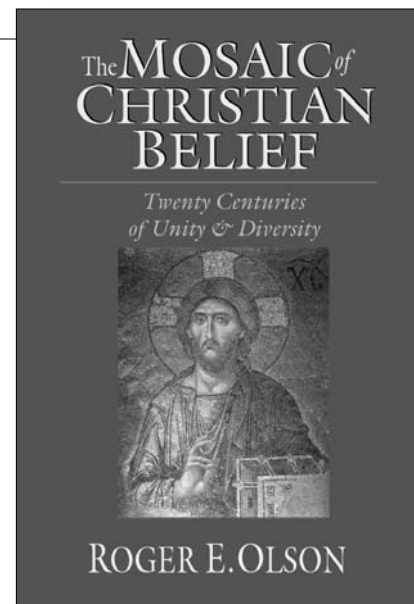
throughout church history some Christian writers and teachers have emphasized God's transcendence one-sidedly, neglecting God's personal presence in and interaction with creation. Other Christians have emphasized God's immanence one-sidedly, neglecting God's majesty and wholly otherness. Why can't it be both-and? That is, why can't we strike a balance of transcendence and immanence in our thinking about God? Most Christian theologians acknowledge that we should and we can, but too often their accounts come across as unbalanced. I'd like to think that we Christians can achieve a modicum of balance in our thinking about God, who of course is beyond our ability to grasp in a simple concept.

DEDDO: I would guess that some of what shapes your approach to theology is a desire to address how evangelicals ought to do theology and approach their theological differences.

OLSON: Yes, that's very much at the forefront of my thinking, and I hope it is reflected in the book. In my opinion (an opinion shared by many of my students over the past twenty years), evangelical theologians sometimes push a thought too far in one direction, insisting that all faithful Christians will think on that same trajectory to the same extent. Evangelicalism thrives best under a generous orthodoxy that does not neglect other aspects of divine revelation and other evangelical points of view in its pursuit of a concept. I believe many evangelicals need a reliable guide to basic Christian orthodoxy (the consensual Christian tradition) that leaves room for different angles of perception and does not try to cram everything into a tight, closed system.

DEDDO: Some may think your approach is relativistic or soft and ill-defined. How would you respond to such concerns?

OLSON: I'd question whether they had read the book with a hermeneutic of charity. I'm more worried that some may think I've slammed the doors shut on too much! Each chapter contains a section on beliefs that are beyond the pale—totally inconsistent with authentic Christianity, simply false from a Christian



point of view. I suppose some good folks may think I've included too much about diverse Christian viewpoints, but I'm always impressed with how multifaceted God's people are, even when it comes to what they believe. That's not relativism; it's just acknowledgment of our finiteness. Now we see through a glass darkly.

DEDDO: You wrote chapters on all the major themes of Christian theology. Was there any particular chapter where, this time around, you came to a fuller and deeper appreciation of some aspect of Christian truth?

OLSON: Without any doubt the area of Christian doctrine I struggle with the most is eschatology. My students know this; many a semester I have managed to stretch out other subjects so that by semester's end we had no time for a study of "the end." There have been times in my life when I thought God's revelation about this whole area was just too murky to make sense of, and it annoyed me that so many people thought they had it all figured out. But I was determined to include a strong final chapter about the fulfillment of God's promises in the future, and I ended up writing two! I still don't claim to know much about the "furniture of heaven" or "the temperature of hell," but I think I now have a deeper appreciation of the hope we share as God's people living by his promises.

DEDDO: Thanks for the interview!

OLSON: You're welcome. And thanks. ■

Pentateuch, continued from page 1

approaches, were somewhat different than they are today. Historical-critical problems were a key area of concern, so studies of questions of history and background were to the forefront. Those are still important issues, but new questions and methodologies have arisen since then, which we also have tried to address. These include literary analysis and social-scientific approaches to the text.

REID: So what are some of the ways in which today is a more opportune time for a project like the DOTP?

ALEXANDER: Several advantages spring to mind. First, Pentateuchal studies today are much more fluid than at any time for the past 100 years. There is a greater diversity in the ideas being promoted, so evangelical writers have greater freedom to write constructively and creatively. There is much less need to be on the defense. Indeed, we need to be advocating and promoting positive ideas about the Pentateuch. Fortunately, many younger scholars have been contributing to this, although it may take time for the fruit of their labor to impact the rest of the scholarly world and beyond. Hopefully, this dictionary may be something of a showcase for good evangelical scholarship.

BAKER: As Desi said, Pentateuchal studies is in a state of flux, especially as regards questions of composition and history or historicity. This project can serve as a good survey of where we have been and suggest paths that need to be explored more fully from here on out.

REID: Do you think evangelical OT scholars are in a position to make an impact on the wider circle of contemporary Pentateuchal scholarship, or is the climate such that we will continue to be talking amongst ourselves and feeding our constituency?

BAKER: Evangelicals, through their own scholarship as well as the support and encouragement of such bodies as Tyndale Fellowship, the John Wesley Fellowship and, to a lesser extent, the Institute for Biblical Research, have been able to secure positions in academic institutions beyond those traditionally regarded as evangelical. This includes folks teaching at major public and private universities. Evangelicals have also been published by major

houses which in the past have avoided evangelical input. I also find it encouraging that some who have not thought of themselves as evangelical have seen it appropriate and valuable to associate themselves with evangelicals in numerous projects, including this one.

ALEXANDER: It's always difficult to judge what others make of evangelical scholarship. Unfortunately, the image probably persists that it is largely obscurantist and negative.

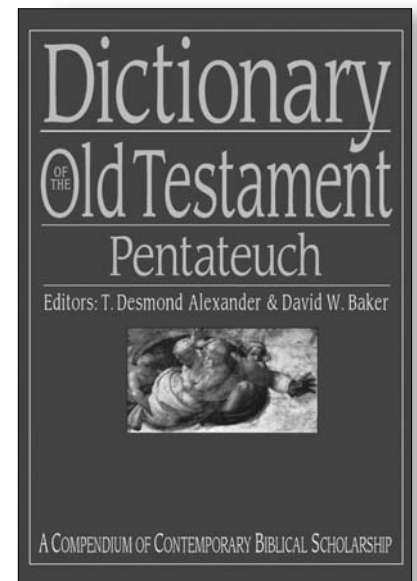
Some scholars, who are far from sympathetic to the evangelical position, may well wish to maintain such a caricature, and it is never too difficult to find examples that support such an outlook. However, that is to ignore the solid work that many evangelical scholars have been doing.

Certainly evangelicals are now found more often in prominent academic posts of theology and biblical studies, something that was very rare fifty years ago. But their presence has yet to make a significant impact on OT studies in general.

REID: It has sometimes seemed to me a historical tragedy that Pentateuchal scholarship since the late nineteenth century has been polarized into "liberal" and "conservative" scholarship—at least from an evangelical viewpoint—and that this polarization has been an impediment to finding resolution to some persistent questions. What do you say?

BAKER: I would agree, and in some ways this reflects the position of the church. We need to ask "what are our common goals, and how can we work together toward solving problems and meeting needs." In the past we too often have said that because we differ from each other in points A and B, we can't work together at all. I think this is close-minded, and does not acknowledge what Arthur Holmes says in the title of his book *All Truth Is God's Truth*. In searching for truth, I would hope that liberals and conservatives could work together. There are certainly areas where presuppositions will affect what questions might be asked and approaches that will be employed, and these are areas where different groups will do their own research and thinking. I would be surprised, however, if the latter category is larger than the former.

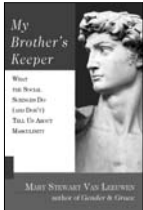
ALEXANDER: Hindsight is always a great thing. However, I'm not sure that historians looking at the study of the Pentateuch throughout the twentieth century will think in terms of "liberal" versus "conservative" as a way of explaining the lack of progress toward resolving particular issues. The academic world does not fall so neatly into these two categories. The main problem has actually been the "moderates in the middle"—be they liberal or conservative in their inclination—who have been reluctant to move in one direction or the other. For me, they explain best the stagnation in Pentateuchal studies, especially as regards the Documentary Hypothesis. We have to remember that this theory became so dominant by the end of the



nineteenth century that to question it was to appear like a lunatic or a dinosaur. In such an academic environment it is little wonder that few voices of dissent were raised. The important lesson to be learned is that every new theory ought to be rigorously scrutinized by the whole of the academic community.

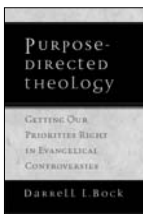
REID: I have seen some very creative work in the DOTP, and a thought has struck me. Might some of the best work be the result of working within certain boundaries and theological commitments, of looking for a third way that stands between naive literalism on the one hand and the historical dismissiveness on the other?

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Women's studies have become an important sector of academic life at both secular and Christian institutions. In 1990 Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen published with us her groundbreaking contribution to that discussion,

Gender and Grace. *My Brother's Keeper* is a companion volume to *Gender and Grace*. She argues that research demonstrates that different social configurations can either inhibit or support the mutuality of men in relation to women. Van Leeuwen assumes the conclusion she came to in *Gender and Grace*, that the biblical narrative moves toward mutuality rather than hierarchy. But those who interpret biblical teaching to uphold certain forms of male headship in marriage, church and perhaps society would benefit from this study as well, since most who hold this position also affirm the ideal of servant leadership and self-giving and repudiate the abuse of leadership. This book will be of interest to anyone who supports these more general Christian virtues and appreciates the countercultural challenges that men face in living them out.



Purpose-Directed Theology began when Darrell Bock gave the Presidential Address at the November 2001 meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society. The overall theme for those meetings was "Defining Evangelicalism's Boundaries."

It was clear to us that what he had to say had much wider relevance to all of evangelicalism: how we deal with theological controversies within its varieties of institutions. With *Purpose-Directed Theology*, Bock brings together his concerns for theological faithfulness and for the unity and charity of the church, the fruits of his own scholarly work and responsibilities, and finally our shared commitment to the church's mission and global witness. The result is a clear call to maintaining evangelical priorities within its various institutions while taking into serious consideration the changing context of the larger culture and the pressures and opportunities it provides.

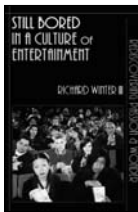
For the last decade, Duane Elmer's book *Cross-Cultural Conflict* has been used as a key text in courses in missiology, anthropology and cross-cultural ministry. Now his new book *Cross-*



Cultural Connections provides an accessible introduction to the dynamics of cross-cultural relationships, not only for people in church and parachurch organizations but also for business professionals who may be traveling internationally. Filled

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

with real-world examples and practical exercises for students, this guide explores the realities of cultural adjustment, examines differences in cultural values and provides guidance for reentry following the experience.



Even though we live in a super-saturated culture of entertainment, "a recent annual study of the opinions of consumers revealed a paradoxical 'boredom boom.'" Intrigued by this ironic phenomenon Richard Winter, a psychiatrist and associate professor of practical theology, uses the latest historical, physiological and psychological research to probe the nature, causes and effects of this "deadness of soul." In his analysis, the author explores the indifference and loss of meaning among youth, why some people are more likely to get bored than others, the attraction of extreme sports, how advertising promotes apathy, and the link between boredom and addictions to violence and pornography. Not satisfied with mere description and analysis, Winter offers practical ways to counteract boredom by learning to live passionately as we delight in God and his good creation.

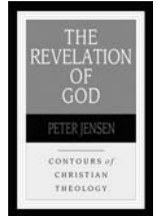
Luke and Genesis 12-50 add the eleventh and twelfth volumes to the distinguished Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Mark Sheridan, OSB, volume editor for *Genesis 12-*



50, is a distinguished patristics scholar and serves as vice rector and dean of the faculty of theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm in Rome, Italy. In the spirit of ecumenicity, Arthur A. Just, a Lutheran, has compiled the commentary on Luke. He is professor of exegetical theology and dean of the chapel at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

The Contours of Christian Theology series is now, with the publication of Peter Jensen's *The Revelation of God*, eight volumes strong (the ninth, and last, will be . . . yes, *The Last Things*—and please don't ask us when!). Jensen, who is archbishop of the Anglican

Diocese of Sydney, Australia, focuses on the revelation of God through the gospel. He examines the nature and authority of Scripture and closes by considering the intriguing question of contemporary revelation. This series, under the general editorship of Gerald Bray, has become known for its consistent quality and reliability, with each volume a textbook guide to a main theme of Christian theology. This volume follows in that tradition and should be of interest to all who teach the doctrines of revelation and of Scripture.



"Now my eyes have seen you." No, that's not what Tom Hanks says to Meg Ryan when they finally meet in *Sleepless in Seattle*. It's a line from another and more timeless drama,



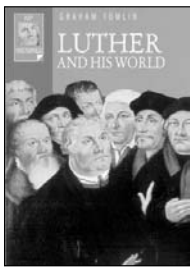
the book of Job, where Job responds to God's self-revelation. Robert S. Fyall's *Now My Eyes Have Seen You* is subtitled *Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job*, which closes in on the gist of the book. Yahweh the Creator, the raging Sea, Behemoth and Leviathan figure heavily in this book. The newest entry in the New Studies in Biblical Theology series is a blend of theological, exegetical and imagery analysis that offers a rare entry point into the book of Job.

In *Shades of Sheol* Philip Johnston of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, gives us a definitive study of the theme of death and afterlife in the Old Testament. This is a book that challenges



some prevailing assumptions and resets the terms of discussion for understanding this theme in the Old Testament. In doing so it enriches our understanding of the backdrop for what the New Testament has to say about death and afterlife—though it leaves that work to New Testament specialists. As Robert Gordon of Cambridge University puts it, "Philip Johnston has analyzed the arguments in masterly fashion, and his study will be a 'must read' for anyone interested in knowing what the biblical writers actually say on the subject." ■

Introducing IVP Histories: Luther, Byzantium, Francis of Assisi and More



Looking for a way to hook your undergraduate students on church history? IVP has what you (and they) are looking for. Colorful, compact, informative, inexpensive and visually appealing, the IVP

Histories are just the thing to supplement a church history course.

The first four books have just been released: *Faith in the Byzantine World* by Mary Cunningham, *Faith in the Medieval World* by G. R. Evans, *Francis of Assisi and His World* by

Mark Galli and *Luther and His World* by Graham Tomlin

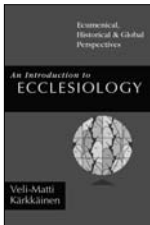
Other books are in the works as well on Augustine, the Celts, Jesus and Palestine, and the story of the spread of Christianity from the first century to the twentieth. These should be released over the next two years.

The purpose of the series is to offer accessible introductions to key periods, people and themes in Christian history. The books range from 160 to 190 pages, have full-color illustrations throughout and sell for just \$14.00 a piece. They won't break a student's book budget, but they will help them enjoy the history they are learning. ■

Guidance Through the Wilderness of Ecclesiology

Special consideration of the nature of the Church has occupied the minds of many theologians over the past several decades. The rapid expansion of Christianity outside the West, combined with the belief in the unity of the church, as well the inherently missionary nature of the Christian faith are sure to keep us all occupied with this topic for some time to come. These two volumes make a considerable contribution to the ongoing discussion.

Theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, a recently appointed faculty member at Fuller Theological Seminary, comes from Finland and brings with him a worldwide awareness of the church. His book *An Introduction to*



Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives provides a primarily descriptive overview of the church, broadly considered. The value of this sweeping survey is twofold: (1) it uncovers the wide range of distinctives

which form and inform the understanding and practice of those around the world who identify themselves as belonging to the church of Jesus Christ. (2) Although some expressions may strain our convictions and imaginations as to whether or not they constitute a faithful part of the church, Kärkkäinen's comprehensive

overview nevertheless reveals some common and pervasive trends which may very well bear witness to the renewing, worldwide and uniting movement of the Holy Spirit in our times.

The sixth in the Christian Foundations series, Donald Bloesch's recently completed volume *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission*, represents a somewhat more normative treatment on the nature of the Christian church. Bloesch, of course, engages the many diverse theologies of the church. Biblically informed and theologically rich, Bloesch's discussion does not avoid the potentially divisive issues especially facing the North American church today. He addresses both age old controversies, such as the sacraments and the church in the plan of salvation, as well as contemporary controversies, such as the form and order of worship, preaching, women in ministry and the basis for pursuing church reunion. Bloesch provides a thoughtful and challenging book, helpful for seminary students, pastors and laypeople who need a guide through the wilderness of ecclesiology to a faithful, renewed church—seeking reunion according to the Word and Spirit of the Living God. ■



Following Christ: a conference for graduate students, faculty and professionals

Cosponsored by InterVarsity Graduate & Faculty Ministries and InterVarsity Press

To be held from December 28, 2002, through January 2, 2003, at the Marriott Marquis in Atlanta, Georgia. Speakers include Marva Dawn, Mark Labberton, Vinoth Ramachandra, Dean Trulear, Miroslav Volf, Dallas Willard and others.

Visit <www.followingchrist.org> for more information about speakers, conference themes, academic and professional tracks, and registration. Questions? Email <info@followingchrist.org>.

The New ACCS Website

Keep up to date with the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Take a look at the new website devoted to news and information on the ACCS series. Visit <www.ancientchristian.com>.

AAR/SBL 2002

The annual joint meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature is November 23–26 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Join IVP for a "Celebration of Consensual Christianity," a reception for Roger Olson, author of *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, Saturday 3:30–5:00 p.m. at the IVP booth (booth numbers 423, 425, 427, 429).

Also be sure to join us for a celebration of the publication of *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary* at the Metro Toronto Convention Center, room 716-B, Sunday, November 24 at 7:00 p.m.

The conference discount will be 50% (all prices in U.S. Dollars). ■

How to Read, that is the Question

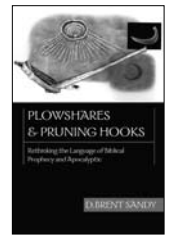
Tremper Longman likes to tell the story of the time when he, as an ambitious graduate student in Old Testament, asked IVP editor Jim Sire for some direction in launching a successful writing career. In Jim's inimitable way, he advised Tremper to consider changing his scholarly interests from Old Testament to something more relevant!



At the center of every pearl lies just such a grain of abrasive grit. Jim Sire has been more influential in Tremper's publishing career than he could have guessed.

In 1988 we published Tremper Longman's *How to Read Psalms*, and over the past fourteen years it has enjoyed enviable success and been widely used as a textbook. Naturally, we began thinking about a fitting sequel, and when Tremper suggested *How to Read Proverbs*, it seemed like a perfect marriage of genre and authorial expertise (he is currently working on a commentary on Proverbs). *How to Read Proverbs* is a book that not only instructs students and laypeople in how to approach and study the book of Proverbs, it is an entrance point into Old Testament Wisdom literature. Here Proverbs is brought into conversation with its canonical colleagues Job, Ecclesiastes and Daniel, as well as with international sages of the ancient Near East.

As Daniel I. Block says: "A must read for all who study and teach the book [of Proverbs]."



In a similar how-to-read vein, D. Brent Sandy's *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* reorients us to the nature and power of metaphor in biblical prophecy. The "implied reader" of the *Alert* (the "real reader" too, we hope) is dismayed by the staggering popularity of a certain series of eschatological fiction and takes opportunities to offer a friendly but corrective word on how biblical prophecy and apocalyptic *should* be interpreted. Said reader has also been eager to find a lucidly written, academically responsible and textually sensitive look at the interpretive issues—something to put in the hands of students and intelligently inquisitive lay people. Maybe even something to sharpen a biblical scholar's approach to prophecy.

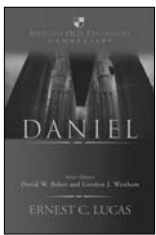
Tremper Longman says of Sandy's book, "Luther is reported to have said that the prophets have a 'strange way of talking.' Anyone who has read Isaiah or Daniel closely knows the truth of these words. Brent Sandy helps us to engage the prophets intelligently and avoid sensationalist readings that take us down a road that obscures God's message. I will recommend this book to all my students."

And we think it is a book that will be helpful to scholars as well. As Old Testament scholar Richard Patterson aptly puts it, "This is not just another book on prophecy. It is a groundbreaking proposal that invites further scrutiny from readers of all persuasions."

And that's no hyperbole. ■

A Passion for the Message of the Text: The AOTC

What? Another commentary series on the Old Testament? Readers of the *Alert* don't ask such questions, of course. But a suspicious spouse or an impertinent student might, and so we come to your assistance, dear reader.

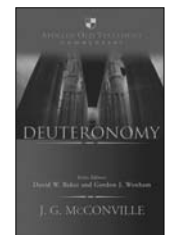


We suggest a counter question to put your interlocutor in defensive mode: "What do you mean by another? Just how many full-scale, evangelical, exegetical Old Testament commentary series are there?"

Then, while they're set off balance, grasping for an argument as they run their eyes over your handsomely stocked OT shelves, move in with this knock-out punch from Hugh Williamson of Oxford University:

"What every preacher and student needs is a commentary which makes positive use of the results of scholarly research while at the same time integrating them sympathetically into a contemporary Christian theological worldview. Many series have set out to achieve this, but few have succeeded. Now at last the Apollos series looks set to do so."

The AOTC is serious about fulfilling the promise of "explanation"—grappling with the passage's interpretational development in Scripture and the church, looking at the theological message of the book within a framework of biblical theology and an evangelical understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament.



Edited by David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, this series promises great things, and the firstfruits may be tasted in two volumes: Deuteronomy, by J. Gordon McConville, and Daniel, by Ernest Lucas. Both are now available and set the benchmark for this series. We expect both of these volumes to be evangelical standards on these two biblical books for years to come. McConville, whose work on Deuteronomy is well known among scholars, focuses on the final form of this foundational book of Scripture, seeking to understand the place that it had in the life of Israel as well as its place as "the canonical book par excellence." This refreshing and stimulating volume is joined by an equally fresh perspective on Daniel under Lucas's expert hand. He too sets his focus on the final form of the book and offers an alternative path to the contested and rubble-strewn routes followed by many twentieth-century interpreters. Illuminating essays on how we should understand and read the stories and visions of Daniel support the commentary itself.

"At last! A commentary series that combines the best of biblical scholarship with a passion for the message of the text. This series by the finest evangelical scholars is designed for students and pastors who are serious about understanding the Old Testament in its context and translating its message for the church in the twenty-first century." **DANIEL BLOCK**, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ■

Pentateuch, continued from page 3

BAKER: I think this is definitely true. I think the middle road you mention might be saying that there are problems needing answers, but there is also a text that can serve as valid and useful, and at times is the sole resource available for answering the question.

ALEXANDER: I think you're absolutely right. We need to develop a "third way." Unfortunately, by its very nature the Pentateuch presents some of the most difficult material to handle in the whole of the Bible. Not surprisingly, there are almost no contemporary sources that shed direct light on the Pentateuch. For this reason, scholars working on historical issues have to tread warily. Likewise, our limited, but gradually growing, knowledge of ancient Near Eastern customs helps us understand some aspects of the Pentateuch better, but there is still much that remains a mystery. Above all, scholars need to learn a little humility and be more willing to admit that their knowledge of the subject is very restricted. The danger is that we try to make more of the available evidence than we should.

REID: What do you say to your students to point out the significance of the Pentateuch for understanding Scripture and for ongoing theological study and reflection?

ALEXANDER: I suppose my approach is to try and open up the text in a way that is both fresh and relevant. Fundamentally, I believe that the Pentateuch is the foundation upon which everything else in the Bible depends. If you don't appreciate the foundation, you will never understand fully the rest of the Bible.

BAKER: I ask them to try to hear what was

SALVATION IS NOT THE GOAL OF SCRIPTURE, BUT RATHER IT IS CREATION. THAT IS, THE ONLY REASON SALVATION IS NECESSARY IS TO GET US BACK TO THE GARDEN.

being said to the first audience, which was asking the same questions as we are. Where did I come from? (Genesis). How do I come to God since I have done wrong? How can I worship? (Leviticus). Why does our family do this, while my best friend's family does different things? How is this night different from every other night? (Exodus). I think in the DOTP we have the advantage over other volumes, including those on the New Testament series. Here is where the players are introduced and the rules of the game are established. Here also the goal is set up before the

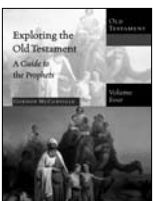
game even starts. I like A. A. van Ruler's observation, which took me a little thought to appreciate: that salvation is not the goal of Scripture, but rather it is creation. That is, the only reason salvation is necessary is to get us back to the garden. The Pentateuch not only presents where we began but also why we are not there any more, and why and how we need to get back.

REID: IVP's New Testament dictionaries have been extensively adopted in classroom teaching. How do you foresee the DOTP assisting those who teach the Pentateuch at the college and seminary level?

BAKER: I have had classroom use as a primary goal—thinking of topics that I want to cover in a Pentateuch class and making sure there are articles for them.

ALEXANDER: One of the big advantages of a dictionary, especially for students, is the focused nature of the topics covered. While it is rarely possible to provide the depth of treatment that a monograph may give, dictionary articles usually give an excellent overview of a subject. They are a good introduction and sometimes, depending on the nature of the course, may be all that a student has time to read. I only wish that there had been more dictionaries available when I was a student. ■

Introducing the *Exploring* series: Old Testament



Did we mention that IVP is publishing some excellent Old Testament studies these days? Following up on two volumes of *Exploring the New Testament, Volume 1* on the Gospels and Acts (by David Wenham and Steve Walton) and volume two on the letters and Revelation (by I. Howard Marshall, Stephen Travis and Ian Paul), we are now releasing the first (well, the fourth) volume of the Old Testament series. *Exploring the Old Testament, Volume 4: A Guide to the Prophets* is written by J. Gordon McConville and is a wonderful textbook introduction to the prophets.

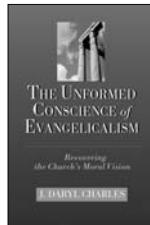
There are differences in opinion on what makes a good textbook introduction. After all, there are varieties of teaching styles and perspectives (a fact that gives authors and publishers reason to continue writing and publishing biblical introductions). But one persistent issue for many who teach Old Testament introductions is that they only teach one or two portions of it—Pentateuch, or historical books, or wisdom and poetry or prophets. Should you make your prophets class buy a full-service Old Testament introduction when your colleague next term will require a different text? And even then, might it not be more attractive to have a textbook that focuses all of its pages and energy on the body of Old Testament literature you are covering?

For those who feel the force of these questions, this series offers a welcome alternative, with excellent, focused textbooks that are filled with helpful features. Gordon McConville's volume on the prophets is masterfully written and represents the best of evangelical scholarship on the prophets. For each prophetic writing he investigates its date and destination, issues of critical interpretation, structure and outline, theological themes, rhetorical intention, and its canonical setting. Throughout the book there are panels, or boxes, labeled "Think About," which invite readers to think about what they have learned (e.g., metaphors and similes or prophetic symbolic actions). And "Digging Deeper" sections invite readers to launch their own investigation of important topics (e.g., Daniel 11 and history or Israel's return to its land). The latter are potential research paper topics. Other panels seek to inform on select topics. Each chapter includes a bibliography for further reading. To this solid and comprehensive textbook platform you can easily add on your favorite supplementary texts—like, say, Brent Sandy's *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks* (see page 6 in this Alert).

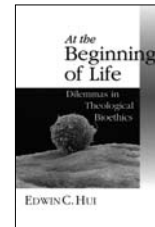
Stay tuned for Gordon Wenham's volume on the Pentateuch, which will soon follow. It is difficult to think of a more suitable evangelical scholar to address that corpus of Old Testament literature! ■

Evangelical Ethics

We all recognize the irony of offering courses which purport to teach ethics by theorizing about ethical systems. Acutely sensitive to this irony, these two books, each in their own way, connect the personal and practical elements of Christian character with a distinctly Christian moral vision. J. Daryl Charles teaches religion and philosophy at Taylor University. His book *The Unformed Conscience of Evangelicalism: Recovering the Church's Moral Vision* was written out of a concern to see the evangelical church and its educational institutions better equip its members to constructively and practically engage personal and social ethical issues. He provides a biblical and theological foundation, calling for a much greater awareness of historic Christian ethical teaching, and he makes suggestions for altering Christian education in a way that influences the formation of character and prepares Christians not just to protest but to be faithful and persuasive. Edwin C. Hui's book, *At the Beginning of*

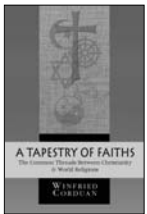


Life: Dilemmas in Theological Bioethics focuses on a particular set of ethical issues, those that involve the beginning of life: artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, embryo transfer, surrogate motherhood, cloning, abortion, prenatal screening and contraception. Hui's training in and practice of medicine enables him to give detailed attention to the particularities of each procedure and the personal trauma of those who must make difficult ethical choices. When combined with the thorough theological foundation he provides on the nature of persons, the results are finely tuned, theologically grounded ethical reflections that will inform all of us—pastors, professionals and those we serve—who face often complicated decisions involving life itself at its vulnerable beginnings. Both these authors offer profoundly Christian insight that promises to contribute to the healing of the breach between ethical theory and practice in the context of personal trial and our present social-moral crisis. ■



A Tapestry of Faiths/ETS

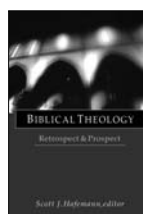
In the midst of ever-growing pluralism, evangelicals have been giving increased attention to world religions, enough so that world religions is the main theme of the 2002 Evangelical Theological Society meeting. In his earlier IVP volume, *Neighboring Faiths*, Winfried Corduan took on the descriptive task, examining in turn the world's major religions, though with a twist—he viewed them in their lived status and not merely as theoretical constructs. In this new volume, Corduan engages in the more evaluative task, comparing the world's religions with Christianity on a number of important content issues: revelation, ethics, Scripture, salvation, messiahs and eschatology. While endorsing an exclusivist position, Corduan does not focus his attention on this issue, but in an irenic fashion seeks to find fords and build bridges for engagement and dialogue with believers from other religious traditions. Christians, he argues, can humbly enter into conversation with believers in other traditions without abandoning either their faith convictions or their confidence in ultimate truth. All in all, *A Tapestry of Faiths* makes a useful text for courses in world religions and apologetics. ■



Biblical Theology

Ever since Brevard Childs's 1970 declaration of the crisis in biblical theology, the discipline has faced rumors of its imminent demise. But the patient refuses to die. The doctors continue to argue over how to proceed with treatment and even over whether treatment is worth pursuing, but the patient hangs on.

The turn of the millennium appears to be a good time for a fresh assessment of the discipline, where it has been, the status of various questions within it and its future prospects. With *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect*, Scott Hafemann pulls together a crack team of practitioners—presenters at 2000's Wheaton Theology Conference—to give us a status report. Just how good a conference this was can be discerned by reading this fine collection of essays.



Wheaton Theology Conference 2003:

The Gospel, Freedom and Righteousness: The 12th Annual Wheaton Theology Conference will be held
April 10-12, 2003.
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