

BOOK REVIEWS

Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner. *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2021. 210 pp. ISBN: 9-780825-44544-6. \$30.99 (CDN) \$18.99 (USD) paper.

The first chapter of the Bible's first book (Genesis) lays the theological foundation for all that follows in Scripture. All-too-often, however, "the richness and beauty" of the creation account is "overwhelmed by acrimony" (3). Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner, authors of *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach*, are persuaded that much of the conflict derives from the erroneous desire of many interpreters to "betroth" themselves to the "one true meaning, forsaking all others. Borrowing from Tolkien, the faithful seek to find the One Interpretation to Rule Them All" (4). In contrast to this, the authors propose that the most effective method of interpreting Gen 1:1–2:3 (hereafter Gen 1) is to look for "layers of truth, each complimenting and expanding on the others" (4 – *italics original*). To this end, they query: "Is it possible that more than one angle or emphasis or theme could be simultaneously valid?" (4). Upon reading *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One*, the answer is an unequivocal 'Yes!'

While some may accuse Davidson and Turner of trickery or some sort of clever ruse to dismiss the "historical veracity of the Bible" and/or "merge the Bible with modern scientific theories of origins," the authors insist that though they have already published material about the "intersection of science and the Bible, this book approaches Genesis free of any obligations or deference to science. There are no scientific arguments or assumptions in these pages" (12).

In addition to this, Davidson and Turner make clear that while certain observations in God's natural creation did cause them to "raise questions" that drove them to look more deeply at God's written Word, the "richness" that they have discovered (so the authors claim) is contained in the Bible itself "independent of the truth or falsehood of any scientific theories. Ultimately, consistent with the Chicago statement on Biblical Inerrancy, the defence of each layer relies on Scripture to understand Scripture" (12).

The primary thesis for *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One* is simple: "Genesis 1 contains layers of truth" (7). Davidsons and Turner's overarching objectives are quite admirable:

Our hope for this book is twofold. The first is that it will contribute to

your appreciation of the grandeur and beauty of the creation story. The second, by virtue of recognizing that the proper understanding is not limited to a single perspective, is that the church will experience greater unity, dropping unhealthy squabbles that undermine its mission. Our hope is that Christians will spend more time in discussions about their *favorite* layers (plural) and less time bickering over which view (singular) should kick all the others out of the theological nest (12 – italics original).

Prior to offering a full-scale review, though, it is prudent to first offer a general orientation to the book as a whole. Aside from a brief acknowledgments section, the introduction, conclusion, two appendices (*An Unbroken Covenant with Nature* and *Excerpts from Ancient Near East Origins Myths*), and a so-called “model approach” (“What Can Be Learned from a Genealogy?”), *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach*, is arranged according to seven concepts or ‘layers’ (each of which constitute a single, roughly-equal-in-page-length chapter): (1) Song, (2) Analogy, (3) Polemic, (4) Covenant, (5) Temple, (6) Calendar, and (7) Land.

Davidson and Turner take great pains to underscore the idea that each separate layer is meant to be understood *complementary* to one another, i.e., no one layer should be viewed in *competition* to any other layer (see pg. 7). In the same way, the authors also highlight that the “manifold beauty of the text, should be apparent even if only a subset of the layers is embraced. In a similar vein, we make no claim that the layers we represent exhaust all possibilities” (7).

A ten-page bibliography and three relatively thorough indices (author, subject, Scripture) round off the volume. One quibble involves the fact that none of the literature of the ancient Near East, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh or the Enuma Elish, for example, is explicitly noted in any of the indices, despite the authors relatively extensive usage of such texts. A welcome bonus is that many ‘key’ original language words, like *berit* (covenant), *hekhal* (temple), *shabat* (cease, rest), and *tob* (good), appear in (non-academic) transliteration in the subject appendix.

Pedagogically speaking, *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One* is exceptionally user-friendly. There is no shortage of stimulating and informative graphic material. The book abounds with charts, tables, maps, diagrams, and even some ‘mind-teasers,’ such as “My Wife and My Mother-in-Law” by William Ely Hillor. Regrettably, however, no ‘listing’ or ‘catalog’ of visuals is included in the volume. The typography is also superb. There is a good use of white space and ample margins. The numerous headings/subheadings make for easy argument tracking and ‘big idea’ connections (the effective use of boldface type is also appreciated). The writing is lucid and clear with Davidson and Turner pitching things just right.

That is to say, the book is written ‘popularly’ enough so as not to drown its audience in a sea of varied layers (though some uninitiated readers may yet feel overwhelmed) yet, even so, it still retains its ‘academic feel.’ An excellent combination for any introductory textbook. The length is also a boon. No student would feel overburdened in reading this volume even alongside multiple other books at a time.

The examples and analogies are poignant and (quite often) unusually enlightening. The mineral analogy concerning fluorite crystal is especially notable (see pp. 5, 53, and 172–73).

If held under shortwave ultraviolet light . . . the pink crystal suddenly glows blue! . . . It is still fluorite. But under the new light, another layer of truth about this mineral becomes evident. It is an understanding we could never have discovered without looking for it. The example could be extended even further, for varieties of fluorite exhibit even more colors under longwave ultraviolet light, and may even display yet another color when heated (thermoluminescence). Each represents a different layer of truth that expands our understanding and appreciation of this mineral (5 – italics removed).

In addition to the above, one notes that each chapter ends with a set of thought-provoking “Discussion Questions” (between three and seven in total). This unique provision makes accommodating the book to some sort of group study particularly easy for busy pastors, church leaders, ministers, and/or teachers, and is a particularly welcome aspect of the book.

The ability of the authors to disentangle some rather ‘knotty’ matters is also exceptionally notable. For example, some people maintain the (erroneous) idea that an analogical view of the days of creation week (cf. Exod 20:11) is based on “circular (thus, false) reasoning in which (1) God’s creation days are patterned after a human work week (Gen 1), and (2) human’s days are patterned after God’s” (50). With respect to this, Davidson and Turner assert: “A genuinely circular argument would indeed be problematic, for if A is the basis for establishing B, and B is the basis for establishing A, then the whole argument is effectively floating without a logical foundation. But an unjustified assumption is made . . . that conflates *bi directional analogy* with *circular reasoning*” (51 – all emphases original). Knowing this explanation may, perhaps, leave some readers still ‘scratching their heads,’ the authors elaborate even more by way of analogy:

When a small notch is carved into the top of an earthen dam, a trickle of water begins to flow. A small flow has limited erosional power, so the channel grows larger slowly. As the channel deepens, the water

flows faster and more energetically, resulting in faster erosion and enlargement of the channel, allowing water to flow and erode still faster. Faster flow contributes to enlarging the channel, and enlarging the channel contributes to faster flow. It is a bidirectional, positive-feedback cycle. In a comparable fashion, my experience as an earthly father enhances my understanding of God as father, and examples of God acting in the role of father in Scripture improves my understanding of what it means to be a *good* earthly father. The flow of information and understanding goes both directions (50 – italics original).

Such well-articulated argumentation is a rare treat to read and proves immensely persuasive.

Another thorny issue involves the parallel structure of the days of creation. To be clear, “some . . . have challenged the existence of a parallel structure (days 1–3 aligned with days 4 – 6) arguing that the luminaries of day 4 were placed in the heavens of day 2 (not day 1), and fish from day 5 were placed in the seas of day 4 or the water made prior to day (not in the “waters below” of day 2)” for instance (38). In response to this, Davidson and Turner maintain:

If attention is only given to the *placement* of the luminaires in day 4, then perhaps an argument can be made against a parallel with day 1 because of the expanse (*raqia* ‘) into which the luminaires were placed was made in day 2. If we are considering *purpose*, however, the parallel is strong. Day 1 and day 4 both serve to separate light from dark and day from night. The objection of aligning the water of day 2 with the fish of day 5 is that the seas (*yammim*) are not named until day 3. But if we again give attention to *purpose*, the expanse (*raqia* ‘) in day 2 was made in order to separate the waters on the earth from the water above the dome (or expanse) of the sky, giving rise to the realms of ocean and sky. This is consistent with the structure and word choice of the fifth day. Day 5 begins with fish filling the waters (*mayim*) and birds flying across the surface of the heavens (*shamayim*). The parallel structure thus proves to be robust (38 – italics original).

This argument is fair and cogent. In fact, it is the most robust explanation that I have read yet!

Note: details become even more clear when combined with the numerous tables (pp. 29, 31, 38).

Davidson and Turner are also to be commended (for the most part) on how they handle various ‘contrarian’ positions. The authors maintain a gracious and

even conciliatory tone throughout the book. There are no *ad hominem* attacks, no ‘straw-man’ arguments, and no undue appeals to authority. Rather, the authors systematically and courteously delineate the various reason(s) why they respectfully disagree. Notably, this often includes thorough engagement with the actual argumentation of opposing viewpoints by means of clear citations to relevant sources.

For instance, with respect to genre and Gen 1, the authors do not side step that some scholars, mostly young-earth creationists (hereafter YEC), tend to downplay the significance of poetic elements in Gen 1 by emphasizing sundry features that are common in Hebrew prose and are generally lacking in poetry (for example, the use of the definite article and direct object marker alongside extensive use of the *waw*-consecutive). To this end, it is only after the authors have thoroughly engaged with each of the different viewpoints (using the *crème de la crème* of the contrarian position’s works on the subject, by the way) that they then elaborate on why they believe Gen 1 to (most likely) be *sui generis* (see pp. 33–35). To be specific, the authors state: “No other Hebrew text . . . is quite like Genesis 1—it is *unique*. The fact that it does not fall neatly within the form of either traditional Hebrew poems or historical narratives should make us hesitant to declare that it must be understood strictly as one or the other” (35 – italics original).

In some cases, however, this even-tempered, congenial disposition might actually prove to be a hindrance and could, possibly, lend itself to the *ad temperantiam* fallacy. By way of example, Davidson and Turner opine: “if there is reluctance to accepting a formal covenant with Adam or the creation, you may nonetheless appreciate the rich use of covenantal language and its implications moving throughout history” (93). Though some may quibble, the idea of a preexisting covenant with either creation or humanity is not necessarily ‘negotiable’ since it potentially impugns the very nature of ‘covenant’ as a whole. As Mark J. Boda states:

A ברית (covenant) is not necessary within a family unit, that is, a parent does not need a covenant with a child, nor a sibling with another sibling. These are natural, trustworthy relationships. No covenant is necessary in the original creation since Yahweh God is identified as a parent producing child, as the ‘image/likeness of God’ language makes clear (see Gen 5:1–3). Once the human couple is banished from the garden in Gen. 3, this family status is annulled, and a covenant is now necessary to structure the relationship between humanity and God . . . this covenant makes possible a renewal of the kinship relationship. The Noachic covenant forms an important bridge between creation and redemption, as God reestablishes kinship relationship with

humanity and all of creation. By placing the Noachic covenant in canonical position before Israel's redemptive story and its relational agreements . . . we are reminded that the redemptive agreements with Israel were part of a much larger story of redemption that would impact not just all nations (Gen. 10) but also all creation. The relational agreement with Noah is thus key to understanding humanity's function as vice-regents over all creation and God's desire through a redeemed humanity to see creation realize its full potential.¹

The significance of this is also highlighted by Genesis' reiteration that it was through Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah (and the only other men who came off the ark), that the earth was "populated/scattered" (נפצה) after the Flood (Gen 9:18–19; 10:1–32).²

In a related way, though the authors earnestly wish to bridge the divide between various positions and perspectives, Davidson and Turner (naïvely?) betray a severe lack of understanding concerning YEC. To be specific, the authors lament: "Unfortunately, what is obvious and most practical often gets muted when we get bogged down in debates over secondary issues" (see pg. 122). Accompanying this, they also opine that (in their estimation) "the date of the creation events in earth history" is an example of a "secondary issue" (122). "What exactly though," one might wonder, "is wrong with these assertions?" To begin, let us note C. John Collins thoughts:

The argument for a young earth . . . goes like this: the phrases 'from the beginning of creation' (Mark 10:6) and 'from the beginning' (Matt 19:4, 8) do not refer to the beginning of mankind [sic] but to the beginning of creation itself. Therefore, Jesus was dating the origin of mankind [sic] to a time very shortly after the initial creation of Genesis 1:1. If there is any kind of time very shortly after the initial creation and the beginning of the creation week, or if the week itself lasts much

1 Mark J. Boda, *Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 100, MT pointing for all of the Hebrew characters removed. Cf. Catherine L. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden: The Creation of Humankind in Genesis 2:5–3:24 in Light of mīs pī, pīt pī, and wpt-r Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt*. Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 15 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015) and Brian Lima "דמוּת וצֶלֶם: Their Kinship Meaning in Genesis" (PhD diss., McMaster Divinity College, 2015). As another scholar puts it: "a covenant was a way of making kin out of non-kin." Sandra L. Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 73. Cf. Dustin G. Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022) 4–7.

2 For a thorough grammatical analysis of this verse's unique phrasing (cf. Gen 11), see the NET Bible.

longer than an ordinary week, then we must conclude that Jesus was mistaken (or worse, misleading), and therefore he can't be God.³

Collins goes on to clarify:

If this argument is sound, I'm in trouble, because . . . I cannot follow this reading of Genesis 1. On the other hand, I firmly believe in the traditional Christian doctrine of Christ, and tremble at the thought of doing anything to undermine it. But the argument is not sound. It finds its credibility from the way the English "from *the* beginning" seems so definite; but the Greek is not fixed in meaning.⁴

What is clear from the above is that Collins does not dismiss the question of the age of the earth as a secondary issue. Instead, he (rightly) ties a proper understanding of these matters to biblical authority via connecting them to the doctrine of Christ (cf. John 18:37).

Whether or not one agrees with this conclusion or even his argument(s), in general, it is clear that Collins gets the 'heart' of YEC. In sum, I believe that Davidson and Turner's failure to fully appreciate the YEC position seems to indicate an unnecessary (gross?) misunderstanding and, in my estimation, potentially undermines their hope that "this work can serve as a balm on the open wounds that Christians have inflicted on other Christians" (176).

A final criticism involves the sustained lack of engagement with non-English literature as well as the odd absenteeism of many fine commentators. Another notable non-attendee is Mark S. Smith's *The Priestly Vision of Genesis* (Augsburg, 2010).

Irrespective of these infelicities, however, *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Mult-Layered Approach* by Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner is a stimulating addition to the ever-increasing library of books concerning this not insignificant portion of Scripture. While not everyone, of course, will agree with all of their interpretations, as Daniel L. Block states: "all should welcome this invitation to conversation and reflection on a rich text that has engaged scholars and ordinary people for thousands of years" (no number, endorsements page).

Its primary readers will likely be the invested layperson, pastors/ministers, Christian educators and leaders, and Bible College/Christian university students. Highly recommended!

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3 C. John Collins, *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 106.

4 Collins, *Science & Faith*, 106. Italics original.

Denis O. Lamoureux. *The Bible and Ancient Science: Principles of Interpretation*. Tullahoma, TN: McGahan, 2020. Pp. 216. ISBN: 978-1-9512-5205-2. \$19.74 (CDN) \$18.80 (USD) paper.

What is the relationship between the scientific method and religion, particularly between modern science and the Christian faith? Are there any principles of biblical interpretation that may help to shed light? Veteran author, Denis O. Lamoureux, invites readers to lean into this controversial yet not insignificant topic in *The Bible and Ancient Science: Principles of Interpretation*.

Lamoureux's goal for this volume is modest. He states: "My hope and prayer for this book is that it helps you to be more mindful of your hermeneutical principles. In this way, you will make informed decisions about the interpretation of biblical passages referring to nature and origins and become better interpreters of the Word of God" (13). The main question, though, of *The Bible and Ancient Science* pertains to whether or not the Bible is a book of science. To be specific, Lamoureux seeks to demonstrate that the Bible has an 'ancient science.' That is to say: "During the inspiration of Scripture, the Holy Spirit came down to the level of the biblical writers and allowed them to use the science-of-the-day as a vessel for delivering life-changing, inerrant spiritual truths" (back cover). Though some might complain that such terminology is, perhaps, anachronistic, the author (rightly) contends that "ancient people were enthralled by nature and they certainly attempted to understand its origins, operation, and structure" (208).

Unlike any of the author's other works, *The Bible and Ancient Science* is arranged via a series of twenty-two "Hermeneutical Principles," each of which constitute a single chapter of the text. There is also an acknowledgments section, an introduction (which contains an enlightening biographical 'backstory' of the origins of this book), conclusion, and three appendices ("Christian Positions on the Origin of the Universe & Life," "The 'Waters Above' & Scientific Concordism," and "Do Isaiah 40:22 & Job 26:7 Refer to a Spherical Earth?"). Regrettably, there are no indices.

Many of the author's hermeneutical principles are (relatively speaking) quite simple. For example, the author stresses the need to read all literature in its context and according to its genre. This is because "the literary genre of a passage dictates how it is to be interpreted" (22—italics removed). Elsewhere Lamoureux ably points out that "non-literal accounts can deliver life changing messages of faith" and heavily emphasizes "Hermeneutical Commandment #1: Thou shalt not believe that the Bible is 100% literal!" (18). He also states: "it is critical . . . we do not confuse and conflate . . . ancient and modern phenomenological perspectives" (41).

Connected to this is one of the most important (and most nuanced) principles

that Lamoureux delineates. This concerns the ‘scope’ of ‘cognitive competence.’ To be clear:

The term ‘cognitive scope’ depicts the mental or intellectual tools through which everyone sees and understands the natural world. An implication of the scope of cognition is that our perception and knowledge of nature have limits and boundaries. This is similar to the margins of a visual field when using the optical scope of a scientific instrument . . . Thanks to telescopes and microscopes our modern scope of cognitive competence is much wider and greater than that of ancient people (90).

Lamoureux contends that a discrete knowledge of this important principle can function as a type of “hermeneutical brakes” that can effectively stop one from “sliding down the so-called ‘slippery slope’ that can lead to a loss of faith” (95). In an excursus, Lamoureux makes explicit:

The miracles of Jesus and his bodily resurrection after his physical death on the Cross are foundational truths of Christianity. First century men and women would have been well-equipped with the intellectual tools to see and know that these miraculous events had actually taken place. In other words, it was well within their scope of cognitive competence. Therefore, this hermeneutical principle acts like a set of ‘hermeneutical brakes.’ It stops anyone from sliding down the so-called ‘slippery slope’ and doubting the testimony recorded in the Bible of those who saw and experienced Jesus’ miracles and resurrection (97).

A related concept to this is the “Message-Incident Principle.” Lamoureux explains this idea: “The Message-Incident Principle states that the ancient science in Scripture is *incidental* because God’s central purpose in the Bible is to reveal messages of faith, and not scientific facts about his creation” (46 – original emphasis). For example, Lamoureux maintains: “In Philippians 2:9-11, the Holy Spirit allowed the apostle Paul to use the ancient notion of the 3-tier universe as an incidental vessel to deliver an inerrant message of faith. As a result, Paul and his readers would have fully comprehended that Jesus is the Lord of the whole world, because from the ancient phenomenological perspective, the 3-tier universe was understood to be the entire universe” (47–48).

Lamoureux is to be commended for his detailed, pedagogically sensitive, analysis. In fact, the “Message-Incident’ principle may, perhaps, be the most important interpretive concept in developing a non-concordist interpretation for statements about nature in Scripture (see p. 194).

In a related way, Lamoureux also opines: “Young earth creationists are quick

to use the Sabbath Commandment [Exod 20:8 and 11] to defend their literal and scientific concordist interpretation of Genesis 1 . . . However, there is a subtle and fatal problem with this argument. It fails to identify the ancient science in the Sabbath Commandment. When Exodus 20:8 and 11 point back to Genesis 1 and the creation of ‘the heavens and the earth, the sea,’ it was referring to the *de novo* creation of a 3-tier universe” (166). While one can, perhaps, appreciate the intent of the author, the only citation of Young Earth Creation (YEC) scholarship in his brief appendix on “The ‘Waters Above’ and Scientific Concordism” (see pp. 199–202), comes from Whitcomb and Morris’ *The Genesis Flood* (Presbyterian & Reformed Press, 1961). Given that Lamoureux explicitly states that “the best evidence for ancient science in the Bible is the firmament” (134), would it not have behooved the author to have ensured that he was refuting the most contemporary YEC position(s) on this topic, especially in light of scholarly advancements?¹

Regrettably, a similar type of situation occurs elsewhere in the text wherein the author accuses both Young-Earth creationists and progressive creationists as embracing a view of God’s Word that could be termed “biblical Docetism/Arianism” (190), yet does not directly engage his opponents’ actual argumentation pertaining to such matters *vis-à-vis* direct quotes/other citations.

Another criticism involves the lack of linguistic precision that Lamoureux offers concerning Leviticus 11:13-19 and the Hebrew terms for “flying things” (עוף) and “the bat” (העטלף). Pointedly, Lamoureux asserts: “One of the best examples of ancient biology in the Bible is the categorization of bats as birds” (42). To be candid, this is not so. Cline’s *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, a tool the author claims to have employed in his writing (208), makes explicit that ‘bats’ are not ‘birds’ but that they do fall under the same category of “flying things.”² In other words, Lamoureux seems to engage in a kind of

‘bananas are berries’ approach to scientific terminology that mistakes the map for the territory. ‘Bats’ are not ‘birds,’ but this is because we

1 For example, one prominent YEC scholar states: “Several creation scientists have reconsidered the *rāqia’*. The *rāqia’* being interstellar space is necessary for Humphreys’ white hole cosmology. Hartnett attempted to explain the abundant water in the solar system by his identification of the *rāqia’* with the space of the solar system. Separating the waters above and below by the earth’s surface is an integral part of Brown’s hydroplate model with the *rāqia’* being the primordial surface of the earth. . . . I have proposed here that *Genesis 1:1* contains an example of introductory encapsulation and that *Genesis 1:6–8* ought to be understood primarily in terms of the creation of what we now call space (or sky)” (פֶּסֶחַ, פֶּסֶחַ). Danny R. Faulkner, *Answers Research Journal* 9 (2016) 57–65. Regrettably, however, as noted above, Faulkner’s work (and many others) does not appear in the bibliography. Cf. Terry Mortenson, “The Firmament: What Did God Create on Day 2?” *Answers Research Journal* 13:1–13:13 (2020) 13.

2 Further lexical details may be found in *HALOT* 1:800–01, 814; *NIDOTTE* 3:381, 837–39; *TWOT* 2:655. Cf. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* (AB), 1:1–1:162; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC), 1:1–1:16. For an exhaustive analysis, see Peter Altmann, *Banned Birds: The Birds of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14* (Mohr Siebeck, 2019).

choose to define the category ‘bird’ in a certain way, and the category ‘bat’ in a certain way. We didn’t ‘discover’ that bats aren’t ‘birds’ since Lev. was written, rather we changed the meaning of ‘bird.’ The sentence ‘bats are birds’ does not necessarily assert incorrectly that bats have feathers, if the person stating it intentionally means a different thing by the category ‘bird’ than you do.³

This truth is also not undermined by any particular renderings of these two specific Hebrew terms into English (cf. EVV). In brief, “Meaning is Different Than Translation.” This exegetical fallacy is discussed at length elsewhere and need not be belabored.⁴

Another quibble involves Lamoureux’s assertion that “the Holy Spirit inspired author of Genesis 1 never intended to offer a list of the divine creative acts in a chronological order” (165).

This assessment, however, tends to break down upon further analysis as the sequential order of events seems to be internally quite crucial to the “structured writing” of Days 1-3 and Days 4-6 that the author advocates for elsewhere (see p. 163). To be clear, Lamoureux maintains that the first three days of creation neatly correlate with the last three days of creation, i.e., “in the first three days of creation, the Creator responds to the formlessness by setting up the boundaries of the universe. During the last three creation days, he resolves the emptiness through filling the world with heavenly bodies and living creatures” (163–64). The difficulty is clear. Do not the waters of “Day One” need to exist prior to them being able to be separated on “Day Two” and for the events of “Day Three” to occur? Likewise, is it not logical to assume that in order for humanity to rule over the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea (Gen 1:28), at least some of these things would need to have been chronologically created earlier? Although one may, perhaps, argue that not everything in the Creation week is necessarily sequential since “light” is created before the traditionally accepted sources of the light (i.e., the heavenly bodies; cf. Gen 1:3–6, 14–19), it remains evident that at least some kind of ordered, chronological sequence is still ‘a given’ by the biblical scribe(s) elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Exod 20:11). To conclude, most attempts to de-chronologize and/or rearrange the sequence of the days of creation week tend to force impossibilities or reduce them into absurdities.

Another (minor) irritant includes the fact that though the author leverages a wide variety of translations (such as the KJV, NRSV, NASB, NIV, etc.), it is not

3 I am indebted to Rick Wadholm Jr. and Tyler Huson (via private communiqué), and Steve Jessop for this insight. See <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/10373/are-bats-described-as-birds?noredirect=1&lq=1>.

4 Benjamin Baxter, *In the Original Text It Says: Word-Study Fallacies and How to Avoid Them* (Energion, 2012).

always clear what version, precisely, he is quoting as no default translation is given and not all citations have references. Some readers may also feel that the author's criticism(s) of certain Bible renderings could stand to be nuanced at times (see pp. 75–77, 126, 209, 210). The same, perhaps, could also be said of Lamoureux's 'recasting' (stretching?) of certain passages of Scripture (see pp. 73–74, 188).

The primary problem, however, with this volume is how little original content is actually contained in *The Bible and Ancient Science*. That is to say, though Lamoureux maintains that he has chosen to update certain aspects of his nomenclature, i.e., he leverages the more relational term "correspondence" over and against the word "concordism" (see pp. 28 and 208), there is very little that is truly 'new' here. That is to say, for the most part, almost everything within *The Bible and Ancient Science* has already been discussed in either *Evolutionary Creation: A Christian Approach to Evolution* (Wipf and Stock, 2008), *I Love Jesus and I Accepted Evolution* (Wipf and Stock 2009), or *Evolution: Scripture and Nature Say Yes!* (Zondervan, 2016). Plainly speaking, having read each of the author's previously published books and having used some of his other material in my own classroom over the years, in certain ways I would have been more pleased to have seen Lamoureux provide an update (second edition), of *Evolutionary Creation* over the publication of what seems to be largely a re-hashing of his already published material.

Interestingly, even some of Lamoureux's most contemporary material in *The Bible and Ancient Science* is repeated verbatim (cf. principle 17, endnote 3, p. 212 with principle 21, endnote 5, p. 215). The book also feels unnecessarily 'inflated' due to the author's tendency to consistently repeat (or, at least, heavily reemphasize) certain points in more than one chapter.

One might also have wished for a more rigorous overarching methodology to bolster the author's assertions and/or supplement his insights since the compilation of so many different 'hermeneutical principles' tends to make the overall interpretive exercise rather unwieldy. Perhaps it would also have benefited the author to have lumped together some of the different principles under main groupings/headings so as to divide them into more manageable chunks.

That being said, however, *The Bible and Ancient Science* retains many of the same fine elements that exemplify this author's other works. These include superb typographical editing throughout the text and well-written, engaging, prose that is free from technical jargon and unnecessary verbiage. The length, too, should also be considered a boon as no student would feel onerously burdened with reading this volume in its entirety even if other books were required.

It should also come as no surprise that Lamoureux's work is replete with an impressive amount of stimulating and informative graphic material (charts, tables,

diagrams, etc.). There are numerous high-quality, high-resolution illustrations and/or facsimiles, such as reproductions of an Ancient Egyptian 3-Tier Universe, Ancient Mesopotamian Astronomy, Ancient Egyptian Creation of Humans, Ancient Egyptian (and Mesopotamian) Geography, and the like. One wonders, however, why there is no ‘list’ of visuals (unlike many of the author’s other works) as finding any one given graphic is fairly difficult. This problem is, most regrettably, acutely exacerbated by the fact that there are (simply) no indices, making it that much more challenging to find specific reference(s) to a particular author or biblical text. A related quibble is that none of the many excursions – “Are the Messages of Faith merely Ancient Human Beliefs?” (50–52), “Hermeneutical Brakes” (95–97), “The God of the Gaps” (151–54), or “Jesus, Adam, and Genesis 1-2” (175–77) – are labelled in the table of contents. Undoubtedly, the inclusion of many of these things (especially indices) would have served a number of readers quite well.

Such matters notwithstanding, *The Bible and Ancient Science: Principles of Interpretation* by Denis Lamoureux is a notable addition to the ever-increasing library of books that concern the inter-relationship of the biblical text and the scientific method. Its primary readers will likely be the invested laypersons, pastors, Christian leaders, apologists looking for more details on Evolutionary Creation, and/or Bible College/Christian university students.

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David W. Bebbington, ed. *The Gospel in Latin America: Historical Studies in Evangelicalism and the Global South*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 243. ISBN 978-1-4813-1722-1. \$49.99 (USD) hardcover.

As an edited volume, *The Gospel in Latin America* presents a wide range of information and perspectives on the rise of evangelical strains of Christianity in Latin America. The book provides essays from several authors who are Latin American, and also from outsiders who are American, English, and even French. The book begins with one section of general studies in Latin American evangelicalism and then progresses to more geographically specific studies. Bebbington’s edited volume presents an excellent picture of the past century of religious evolution in Latin America.

In compiling a cohesive collection of perspectives on evangelicalism, at least one issue immediately arises for the editor: what is evangelicalism? In the introduction, a very basic definition is presented. In compiling a cohesive collection of perspectives on evangelicalism, the editor is clear from the beginning that he is focusing very broadly on “the movement associated with the spread of the gospel”

(20). The first chapter, written by John Maiden, addresses specifically the charismatic renewal movements which began in the United States and the United Kingdom and later spread to Latin America. He spends time discussing the rise of Pentecostalism within this area and the “web of influence US Christians wove — or found themselves woven into” in Latin America in the 1980s and the way that it “exemplified the transnational connectivity, shared evangelistic goals, and extensive reach of the global evangelical community” (25).

Following this, J. Daniel Salinas discusses the way that the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* (the Latin American Theological Fellowship) developed and began to have an impact both in Latin America and beyond. Next, Virginia Garrard presents a chapter on various theological movements including Dominion Theology and the New Apostolic Reformation in Latin America. Specifically, concerning Dominion Theology, she discusses the way it caused, and perhaps even demanded that Christianity become political so that there might be a way to resurrect a godly culture from the destruction secular liberalism has wrought. Moving toward more practical ramifications, Philip Jenkins discusses the effect of rising evangelicalism on the birth rates in Latin America. Ending this section, David C. Kirkpatrick gives a broad historiography of the subject of Latin American evangelicalism. He ends his chapter, and the section by encouraging his readers to “allow Latin American evangelicalism to display its own agency, one of negotiation, resistance, adoption, and local construction” (115).

In the second section of the book, Pedro Feitoza opens by giving a history of the evolution of evangelicalism in his home country of Brazil. Key to the growth of this sub-movement was an adapted Liberation Theology that prioritized justice in the life of the church. Joseph Florez follows this by sharing more personal accounts of the rise of Pentecostalism in his home country, Chile. In addition to his narrative approach, he provides an abbreviated explanation for why he thinks Pentecostalism has found such success in his country — it works well with the indigenous worldview already present.

Matt Marostica presents a similar argument regarding Argentina, where the fall of dictatorship provided the perfect situation for evangelicalism to find identity and success independent of the foreign influence that had previously dominated it. In a slightly different way, in discussing Peru, Véronique Lecaros presents an evangelicalism that was not brought by political change, so much as it brought about political change. Finally, Matthew Reis connects the Western origins of Latin American evangelicalism with a discussion of how it has come, full circle, back into the United States through undocumented immigration.

The book offers a range of perspectives as diverse as evangelicalism in Latin America. It does not fixate on any one branch of evangelicalism, like Pentecostalism. It does not center around one theological perspective like dominion or

liberation theology. Perhaps most significantly, it does not overly emphasize the political impact of evangelical movements. Instead, it almost leans into the heterogeneity of the practices, beliefs, and emphases of Latin American evangelicals. The diversity in unity found in the movement seems to be the driving force. This theme comes through in the voices and subjects of the various authors represented, but they are arranged in an order that is logical and well-flowing.

As an anthology of essays, the book is a little difficult to follow and is at some points far more engaging than at others. While it provides excellent scholarship, it is a dense and difficult read. Likewise, while the wide spectrum of perspectives and topics offered is wonderful for a reader looking for a glimpse into the diversity of Latin American Christianity, one wonders if the definition of evangelicalism is too broad. Using the definition provided by Bebbington, certain branches of Roman Catholicism could be considered just as evangelical as the Protestant movements described, yet only the latter is discussed. *The Gospel in Latin America* is likely best utilized as a small reference work but is a valuable resource for any student of Latin American Christianity or Christianity in the Global South as it provides well-articulated perspectives on a variety of issues.

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Sarah J. Melcher. *Prophetic Disability: Divine Sovereignty and Human Bodies in the Hebrew Bible*, Studies in Religion, Theology, and Disability, eds. Amos Yong, Sarah J. Melcher, and John Swinton (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022). Pp. 145. ISBN: 978-1-4813-1024-6. \$39.99 (USD) hardcover.

It can likely be said that the function of the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible in modern society is a contested issue. Do the political, theological, and socio-economic critiques of the prophets against ancient Israel/Judah hold modern relevance? If so, in what way, and how is this attained? One aspect that remains relatively constant by those who see modern import in such critiques is the role of the prophetic in empowering the marginalized in the presence of oppressive power structures. Marginalized groups such as women, immigrants, the poor, and racial minorities all bring their own unique perspectives to the interpretation of the prophetic literature and have drawn much comfort and support from it. Yet, what place does the prophetic literature have when seen through the lens of disability? Sarah Melcher seeks to address this question by exploring the tension between the role of disability metaphor within the prophetic literature and the theme of divine sovereignty in her work, *Prophetic Disability*, which constitutes the first ever

treatment of the intersection of disability and the prophetic literature covering the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve.

Consisting of four chapters with an introduction and conclusion, *Prophetic Disability* first begins by outlining the methodology of the study in the introduction. Here, Melcher focuses upon Tom Shakespeare's critical realist approach to disability, arguing that "[m]aterial things have an existence independent from what they are called" (2). Put differently, the experience of disability is different from what is typically believed about it. Combining this approach with Martha Nussbaum's list of values for quality of life, Melcher then explores Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve across four chapters. These chapters principally explore how disability functions as metaphor within the prophetic material and how the sovereignty of God is also held as a theological reality. At the end of each of these surveys, Melcher briefly expounds upon the surveyed material, synthesizing theological implications and insights from the books. Finally, Melcher concludes the book by highlighting some of the recurring themes found throughout the material while utilizing the aforementioned work of Nussbaum.

With a title such as *Prophetic Disability*, one could be forgiven for thinking the subject would focus upon prophets with disabilities, or possibly how the subject of disability is treated within the prophetic corpus. However, it is clear early on in the book that the focus is upon the identification of disability metaphors within the prophetic literature. More specifically, Melcher's analysis addresses the interaction between such metaphors and the central theme of the sovereignty of God within the prophetic literature. It is related to this focus that Melcher is largely critical of the prophetic usage of disability metaphors in conveying deep distress and vulnerability, seeing it as problematic and disparaging. This is especially the case when the material seems to represent moral impurity or sinfulness through disability metaphors. As Melcher notes, an "issue raised early in the book of Isaiah and repeated in other prophets is the use of the metaphor of the wounded body to connote unfaithfulness. Disobedience to YHWH is manifested in the prophetic literature often as a wounded body, such as in Isaiah 1, for example" (105). While Melcher's analysis is quite generalized—especially in identifying said metaphors—this is still a valid concern in my opinion and one that deserves further reflection.

One especially positive insight of Melcher's work here is her chapter on Jeremiah, particularly the section on theological implications. Utilizing the work of Deborah Beth Creamer, Melcher highlights the importance of limitation, stating that "we all have limitations before the sovereign and providential God. Jeremiah's description of God's sovereignty and providence means that all persons are limited before God, but that our limitations do not prevent God from

disciplining us, caring for our needs, or nurturing the divine/human relationship” (61). Thankfully, many insights such as this one can be found throughout Melcher’s work.

However, despite these insights, there are aspects of the book that warrant criticism. First, while the introduction establishes Shakespeare’s critical realist approach as foundational to Melcher’s analysis, the methodology never truly emerges throughout the book’s examination of the prophetic literature. Rather, it is the tension between disability metaphor and the affirmation of divine sovereignty in the prophetic literature that encompasses the focus of the book. As such, I am uncertain as to the importance of the critical realist approach throughout the book as it seems to hold little impact upon the overall exploration. Unfortunately, what results from this is a general lack of cohesion to the book.

Second, in her attempt to find disability metaphors throughout the prophetic material, Melcher often stretches these beyond reasonable interpretation. For example, this emerges when Melcher includes any and all mobility imagery, whether it be walking, running, or the marching of an army in her analysis. If God is said to stop an army, this is then seen as an inappropriate disability metaphor. Another especially striking example can be found in Melcher’s parameters for analyzing disability metaphors, where she includes feminine imagery in her analysis. Her reasoning rests upon the connection between the two, as feminine imagery is often argued to be used to signify spiritual or moral issues just like disability metaphors. Melcher also suggests, in line with the work of Carole Fontaine, that “feminine gender was a disability in the ancient world” (41). Within the context of Isaiah, Melcher notes that “women and people with disabilities share a reduced status in the perspectives of the Isaianic authors. This may reflect a cultural situation in ancient Judah where women were considered second-class citizens” (41). However, while Melcher is right to note the marginalized place of women in ancient Israel, as well as the broader ancient Near-East, it is not apparent that this was seen as a disability in antiquity, nor is it apparent that marginalization is entirely synonymous with disability. This is a leap in logic that seems to stretch the usage of feminine metaphors beyond what is reasonable.

Ultimately, it must be recognized that *Prophetic Disability* has many shortcomings. Yet there are also many important insights, such as Melcher’s analysis of the tension between how disability is reflected in the prophetic material versus the reality of divine sovereignty. Unfortunately, the relatively short length of the book does not allow for all the aspects of Melcher’s approach to emerge, such as the impact of Shakespeare’s critical realist approach. Despite these critiques, Melcher is certainly to be commended for initiating this important study, as the prophetic corpus constitutes promising ground for future disability work. Whether one agrees with all of the analysis and conclusions, it serves as a vital step forward in

the examination of disability in the Hebrew Bible. Though it is tragic that such studies are only now emerging, one can hope that they will continue to emerge and bring forth new and impactful insights.

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S. Lily Mendoza and George Zachariah, eds. *Decolonizing Ecotheology: Indigenous and Subaltern Challenges*. Intersectionality & Theology Series 3. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022. Pp. 312. ISBN 978-1-7252-8640-5. \$40 (USD) paper.

Over the last number of decades ecotheology has deepened our understanding of how theology and philosophy have justified the domination of nature. Ecofeminists and ecowomanists, for example, have noted the entanglement of patriarchy and racism in the process. The essays in *Decolonizing Ecotheology* seek to deepen further the analysis of displacement and domination. Edited by S. Lily Mendoza, from Oakland University in Michigan, and George Zacharia, from Trinity Methodist Theological College in Auckland, New Zealand, the chapters were part of the “Earth” stream of the Discernment and Radical Engagement Global Forum held near Taipei, Taiwan, in 2019.

As the editors admit, the voices are diverse and use different methodologies – whether anthropological, sociological, historical, biblical, or theological. Nevertheless, they are united in the conviction that mainstream ecotheology is still “embedded in colonial and neo-liberal epistemologies” (1) and therefore a “creation theology of conquest and displacement” needs to be dismantled (3). In practical terms, “ecotheological ministries that initiate campaigns on simple living, vegetarianism, planting trees, and reduce-reuse-recycle” do not go far enough (6). To help remedy this, this collection provides a “robust polyphony of reportage, wonder, analysis, and acumen seeking to open the door to a different prospect for a planet under grave duress and a different self-assessment for our own species” (15).

After the Introduction, the book is divided into four parts. “Part One: Earth Words: Revelation and Flow in the Bible” contains three essays. The first by James Perkinson seems to argue that the preaching of Jesus at times reaches back behind established Israelite religion to a more nature-friendly Canaanite view that was not hampered by monotheism and monoculture. This is a bold thesis. Unfortunately, the fast-paced style of the writing undercuts the clarity of the argument and the patient unfolding of the evidence needed. The second essay by Barbara Rossing is more convincing. She draws out the themes of God’s water of life and undrinkable water in the book of Revelation and suggests the relevance of this for

the struggle for water in Palestine and Standing Rock. In the third essay, Enolyne Lyngdoh reads Psalm 104 in light of the sacredness of nature found in Khasi belief of Northern India. Since most Khasi today are Christian, this is certainly a valuable exercise.

Part two of the book, “Earth Rites: Ritual Transgressions and Transformations”, also has three essays. The first by Ferdinand Annon examines the Podong rite of the Igorot people in the Philippines. The rite serves as a form of protest and resacralization in the face of damming, logging, and the assassination of indigenous leaders. The Igorot worldview, moreover, suggests a “just egalitarian ecosystem” that is “radically embedded in the consciousness, lifeways, and traditions of the Igorot” (81). The second essay by Faafetai Aiavā recounts a creative “ceremonial rearrangement” when the character Eleele, a Gaia-like character from a Samoan creation story, is inserted into the Genesis narrative. He recounts how this was effectively used in different contexts. In the third essay, Kathryn Poethig examines the miracle stories of Cambodian and Vietnamese Buddhists recovering statues of Roman Catholic saints that were lost during the Khmer Rouge regime. In these stories rescuers receive “epiphany dreams” that for Poethig suggests the anthropological concept of a “oneiric ecumene, a multidimensional dream world inhabited by entities who traverse the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of the dreamer” (109). This is a fascinating piece though less connected to ecotheology than other chapters.

Part Three, “Earth Politics: Practices and Movements on the Ground”, has two essays from North American, one from Africa and one from Palestine. E. Sheryl Johnson wonders if the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada could inspire a similar process for climate justice. She focuses on the importance of climate debt found in “the historical trajectory of colonialism and globalization” (135), especially between the Global North and the South. In “Where Earth and Water Meet” Sophia Chirongoma summarizes how dam projects have been devastating for indigenous Karanga communities in Zimbabwe—especially given the connection between animals, land, rituals, and ancestors. She argues that proper consultation would have allowed for better resettlement that included the survival of livestock and the inclusion of religious rituals. The chapter by Yousef Kamal AlKhouri, an Arab evangelical theologian teaching in Palestine, explicates the connection between eschatology and creation care in the Israeli colonization of Palestine. He demonstrates how Christian Zionism justifies and finances this to the detriment of Palestinians. The last chapter of this Part by established Lutheran theologian and ethicist Cynthia Moe-Lobeda addresses a North American audience in order to “foment moral-spiritual agency” (175). She first diagnoses the problem and then outlines wide-reaching practical suggestions. We eagerly await

the full version of her paradigm in book form. These last two chapters are certainly important for North American readers of CATR.

The last four chapters are under “Earth Uprisings: Decolonization and a Return to the Commons”. George Zachariah notes that for many in India ‘Poromboke’ is a derogatory term referring to unclean or unused lands, which can easily be appropriated by the state or corporations. However, for local subaltern communities this land is a source of subsistent living, so Zachariah calls for a Poromboke ecotheology that calls into question caste and class. From Brazil, Nancy Cardoso’s provocative essay draws an analogy between pornography and current monocrop agriculture, both of which are based on patriarchal views of control and abuse. As an alternative she points to practices of appreciating the land and sharing local farming knowledge. In James Perkinson’s second essay he turns to the Cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the myth of Quetzalcoatl in Mexico. He suggests they provide sites of resistance and for the recovery of a more fully animated world. The last paper by S. Lily Mendoza is an excellent piece that narrates the author’s own struggle of growing up in an American form of Christianity, both in the Philippines and then America, which separated her from indigenous connections to the land. The tension becomes too much to bear and so she explores shamanistic traditions of the Philippines through the Center of Babaylan Studies, of which she is the Executive Director. This chapter illustrates very well the tensions between Christian faith, identity, nationality, and indigeneity.

The chapters in *Decolonizing Ecotheology* are invaluable rich and such brief summaries do not do them justice. They cover a diversity of indigenous and subaltern perspectives throughout the world and demonstrate the problems with colonization, both past and present. They often highlight the importance of land and animals for local communities and how this has been neglected by Christian communities. The editors do well to introduce the problem and then allow the different voices to speak for themselves. This is a rich resource for scholars working in ecotheology and many of the chapters could serve as course readings though they would have to be paired within something that more clearly introduces readers to the basic concepts and problems.

However, given the diversity of methods there is no clear definition of what counts as theology, and in fact many of the authors don’t seem to view themselves as theologians. In other words, not all of the essays are exercises in postcolonial ecotheology, though most present postcolonial critiques of ecotheology. Another issue is that there is no attempt to theorize on a larger scale the relation between theology and colonization – though the essays by Perkinson point in that direction. For example, none of the authors engaged Willie James Jennings’ book *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Yale, 2010). This work narrates and explicates the categories of displacement and translation that could

be applied in various contexts, even while being concerned with a constructive theological response. Such an approach would enable someone who confesses a traditional trinitarian theology (as with this reviewer) to begin the constructive task of not only affirming God as the creator of nature but of diverse cultures, languages, and places as well. This would include an affirmation of indigenous ways of experiencing and relating to nature. Nevertheless, constructive theology is not the aim of this collection and it certainly succeeds in presenting a polyphony of voices for the future of ecotheology.

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Andrew C. Witt. *A Voice Without End: The Role of David in Psalms 3–14*. Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplement 20 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2021). Pp. xii + 242. ISBN 978-1-64602-111-6. \$34.99 (USD) paper.

Has contemporary psalm scholarship properly grasped how the figure of David is utilized within the book of Psalms? is the question driving Andrew Witt's ground-breaking work, *A Voice Without End* (2). According to Witt, ambiguity still lingers in relation to the figure of David especially within Pss 3–14, a cluster of psalms which has received limited consideration in contemporary psalms scholarship. Witt therefore endeavors to fill this lacuna by examining the relationship between the speaking voice of David and that of the figure of David in Pss 3–14. By so doing, Witt argues that the multivalent figure of David still speaks in the present and the future (2). Additionally, by juxtaposing Psalms 2–3, Witt argues that one can already begin to observe the failure of the covenant through David's rebellious son Absalom (Ps 3), and the success of the covenant through David's son Solomon, and thus the hope of God's faithfulness in keeping His covenant with David (Ps 2).

To demonstrate his point, Witt divides his monograph into six chapters. In the first chapter, he relies on the works of Brevard Childs and Gerald Wilson as he outlines his methodology of canonical criticism. This he believes fits best with his interpretive approach to the literary figure and voice of David within Pss 3–14.

This is followed by the history of interpretation, both pre-modern and modern, in relation to the speaking persona(e) in chapter 2. Here, Witt divides the pre-modern interpreters into two exegetical categories: prosopological (Origen and Augustine) and typological (Aquinas and Calvin). Since his work employs elements present in both exegetical categories, Athanasius serves as Witt's fifth conversational partner. While one does observe an overlap between prosopological and typological exegesis, the fundamental difference lies in how "One construes the

original utterance of the psalm and its later use” (49). In prosopological exegesis, “The prophet David speaks in the voice of another, with no need for correspondence between the experience of David and the one who actualizes his words” (49–50). In typological exegesis, however, “The correspondence between David and Christ is of utmost importance, as the speech of the anti-type brings the type’s words to their fullest and truest expression” (50).

For the modern interpretation of the speaking persona(e), Witt converses particularly with W. M. L. de Wette who observed incongruities between the historical claims of the superscriptions attributed specifically to David (since the majority are ascribed to David) with the life experiences of David. In this light, it is hardly surprising that he recommended viewing the superscriptions as suspicious (73). Motivated by this pessimism, de Wette thus proposed that one should view the speaking persona of David simply as a generic “Everyman,” that is, “someone who is difficult to place historically but has appeal for readers in any age” (75).

For the remainder of his monograph, Witt examines the shaping of the figure of David in the Psalms in chapter 3 before exploring the figure of David in Pss 3–6 and Pss 7–14 in chapters 4 and 5 respectively. By observing that Pss 1–2 serve as an introduction to the first cluster of Psalms (3–14) and the entire Psalter in its canonical or final form, Witt endeavors to show that the central figure of Pss 1–2 is a psalmic David and should thus be distinguished from the narrational David of 1–2 Samuel. As such, from chapters 3–5, Witt demonstrates how the David that is nascent in Pss 1–2 and developed in Pss 3–14 emerges as a fourfold multivalent figure:

- i. A Biographical David. This David is known to the reader specifically from his life experiences recorded in 2 Sam 15–18 (154).
- ii. A Typical David. This David is representative of all pray-ers down through the centuries (158). One therefore prays these predominantly lament prayers in Pss 3–14 alongside this David, identifying with his struggles and continued hope in YHWH to rescue him out of his distress (159).
- iii. A Typological David. This David holds in tension the exemplary “Blessed Man” (1:1) and anointed Son (2:7), with the expectation of a future Davidic heir who would actualize the promises made to David (2 Sam 7) and rule over the nations in accordance with Ps 2:7–9 (161). Therefore, in light of the entire biblical canon, this David is a type of the Messiah whom Christians identify as Jesus Christ, the anti-type (161).
- iv. A Didactic David. This David is known to the reader specifically from his life experiences or ongoing troubles with the Benjamites and

therefore stands as a representative model for all those who face injustice (176). This David reflects on the course of his life and subsequently instructs the reader to petition YHWH for justice in light of the nature of YHWH's righteous judgments (177).

In the conclusion (chapter 6), Witt summarizes: "When taken together, Pss 3–14 provide the Psalter's initial exploration of the themes presented in Pss 1–2, as well as our first introduction to the figure of David, who will remain present with the reader throughout the book" (206). In this way, far from being static or ancient, the figure of David's literary voice still speaks today. Herein lies the potency of Witt's argument, which will benefit not only scholars, but all Bible teachers across the board, and especially those who tend toward polarizations, that is, to either reject the superscriptions, on the one hand, or more so, to conform the David in the psalms to the David in the 1–2 Samuel narratives.

That said, a couple of issues do arise from reading Witt's monograph. First, while he makes repeated mention of editorial work in relation to the superscriptions, he does not proffer any substantial evidence for arriving at such a conclusion; this is simply assumed. Second, Witt avers that the biographical information in the headings of Pss 3 and 7 should be viewed as the contextual setting for Pss 4–6 and 8–14 respectively since the latter two clusters contain no biographical information. However, if the biographical information of Ps 3 stands as the contextual setting for Pss 4–6, should the biographical information of Ps 7 not stand as the contextual setting for Pss 8–33, especially since Ps 34 is the next Psalm that contains biographical information (even if some have observed a chiasmic structure to Pss 15–24)?

Furthermore, in light of לְמַנְצָה plus optional prepositional phrases originally serving as *postscripts* rather than superscripts to the psalms preceding them (see Bruce Waltke's "Superscripts, Postscripts, or Both," *JBL* 110.4 [1991]: 588–89), one does wonder what theological insights might emerge from reading *backward*, that is, Pss 1–2 in light of Ps 3 and Pss 4–6 in light of Ps 7.

All things considered, far from being left behind, Witt has cogently demonstrated that the literary voice of David is truly a "voice without end" (203).

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Rick Wadholm Jr. and Megan D. Musy, eds. *Community: Biblical and Theological Reflections in Honor of August H. Konkel*. McMaster Biblical Studies Series 9. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022. 272 pp. ISBN: 978-1-5326-3928-9. \$53.86 (CDN) \$39.65 (USD) paperback.

With joy-filled adoration, the psalmist celebrates the unique relationship the LORD has with his faithful community, summoning worshipers to praise Yahweh for his faithfulness and imploring them to “serve” (עבד) God with “gladness” (שמחה) and to “come before him, singing with joy!” (Ps 100:2 NLT). Similarly, Dr. August “Gus” H. Konkel has joyously dedicated himself to spurring the community of faith vis à vis his tireless commitment to astute theological reflection (faith seeking understanding) in both the Church and the academic community.

Community provides a constructive collection of thirteen essays offering biblical and theological reflections on the title theme in honor of Konkel’s seventieth birthday. As such, *Community* follows the trajectory of Konkel’s own myriad contributions to scholarship that have been intentionally engaged both on behalf of and as a lively and constructive member of such community. These essays present forays across the spectrum of biblical and theological studies that intersect with the many contributions of Konkel’s life work (see back cover). Rick Wadholm Jr. (editor) hopes that this volume, *Community*, “blesses Gus for his astute work on behalf of the Christian community, blesses that community, and above all, blesses the Lord, the center of this community” (xx–xxi). Incontrovertibly, *Community* succeeds in this (rather modest) endeavor.¹

Aside from a brief introduction that offers a short biography of Konkel’s life, some personal reflections on “Gus” and community, and a brief overview of the different contributions to *Community* as a whole (along with a bibliography of

1 For full disclosure, I had the privilege of studying full-time under Dr. Konkel while earning my MDiv (biblical languages) at Providence Theological Seminary where I took (for credit) Hermeneutics, Old Testament Text and Interpretation, Psalms, and Old Testament Theology alongside (as an audit student) Job and some select classes on Qumran. Gus and I also worshipped together (along with our families) during my time in seminary at St. Pierre Bible Fellowship (MB, Canada). Notably, Gus also officiated our wedding (Rebecca and Dustin) at the same home church. In the course of time, Dr. Konkel became my first advisor at McMaster Divinity College (MDC) where I earned my terminal degree (and took several Bible-related courses with Gus!). During that period, Gus also chaired the first paper I ever presented at a theological conference (fittingly published in Providence’s journal, *Didaskalia*, my first article!) and was president of the first academic guild that I ever became a member of (and now serve on the executive council for) namely the Canadian American Theological Association (once CETA). Gus and I also co-taught a one-week modular course (Hermeneutics) at Providence and I am proud to have been a graduate assistant of his as well at MDC. Lastly, Gus also wrote the forward to my book, a form of my 2019 dissertation entitled “Cosmos to Chaos—Chaos to Covenant,” revised for publication as *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical-Critical Reading of Noah’s Flood in Genesis* (Pickwick, 2022). I have never tired of learning from this remarkable individual!

Konkel's own published work) the book is comprised of thirteen different essays from various scholars. As Wadholm judiciously asserts:

The tone and content of the individual chapters reflect the diversity of its contributors, because this is the nature of a *Festschrift*, a collection of essays in honor of a scholar. These chapters were written to honor Gus, as a former student, professor, scholar, colleague, and friend; they reflect a diversity of aims, overall, and writing styles (xix).

The topics covered in the text vary quite widely. By way of example, several biblical books, such as Isaiah, Job, Zechariah, and Judges, alongside the Synoptic Traditions of the Old Testament, i.e., Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, are all covered in-depth. This is not to mention the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Old Greek/Septuagint (LXX), and certain theological matters (such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the intersection of Pentecostalism and the Mennonite tradition). That said, the distinct quality of the contributors themselves, i.e., Mark J. Boda, Mary L. Conway, Paul S. Evans, Daniel K. Falk, Patrick S. Franklin, Rick Wadholm Jr., Randall Holm, David H. Johnson, Martin W. Mittelstadt, Stanley E. Porter, Gary V. Smith, H. G. M. Williamson, and Albert M. Wolters, is exceptionally notable as each author is a world-renowned, recognized expert in the field and each essay markedly furthers the discipline of that specific guild. The unique combination of pastoral sensitivity and relevant application points alongside the broad range of academic disciplines covered therein make *Community* a remarkably impressive text.

Perhaps the crown jewel of the volume (given his role in various key aspects related to the LXX) is "Where is the Study of the Septuagint Going, and Should It?" by Stanley E. Porter. Within this article, Porter (judiciously) asserts that "the issue in reading the Septuagint (in Greek or translation) is to appreciate it as a living scriptural document for the worshipping community and profitable for spiritual instruction" (129). Elsewhere Porter (rightly) argues:

We can see that . . . Septuagint studies are generally orientated in a particular direction. To summarize, this orientation is to rely upon an eclectic text, emphasizing the Semitic character of the Septuagint Greek language, and be translator-centered in nature as reflected in the interlinear paradigm . . . there is [however] no compelling reason why Septuagint studies should continue to be headed in this direction. There are in fact good reasons. . . why it should not, if for no other reason than to provide a balanced and complimentary approach" (139).

The unbridled admiration, respect, and love that people have for Gus is palpable throughout *Community*. This is, perhaps, most evident through the words of Gary V. Smith:

I knew from the very beginning of my association with Dr. Konkel, when he was one of my students at Winnipeg Theological Seminary (now Providence Theological Seminary), that I was dealing with an exceptional overachiever with an infectious laugh. His joy for studying God's word was very evident and his enthusiasm for understanding Hebrew in an intensive summer class demonstrated his determination. Some years, [sic] later after leaving that ministry, I gladly recommended that he take my teaching position, and I have marveled at how God has multiplied his ministry since that time (57n1).

Rick Wadholm Jr. also (quite poignantly but also quite accurately) writes:

Gus Konkel is the consummate pastor with the insight of a prophet (though I dare say he would not self-claim this latter). In his classes and personal interactions, he takes pastoral concern for students, friends, and co-workers seriously. As one of his students, I observed that he would lead classes of students to discern for themselves (in community) in what ways they might faithfully hear and obey the Scriptures within their respective church communities. This contextualization was pastoral for those communities and also provided space for prophetic witness *within* (sometimes *against*, but always ultimately *for*) those church communities (43 – all emphases original).

Given these strengths, it is difficult to find fault with this book. Some minor irritants include the somewhat odd combination of un-pointed Hebrew characters alongside a vocalized text (sometimes, rather oddly, even in the same essay!). In addition to this, certain evangelicals (and also, perhaps, the individual to whom this book is dedicated) may also take umbrage with the predilections of one contributor's viewpoint on a fairly sensitive subject (see pg. 98–99). One may also have wished for a clearer delineation of Konkel's rather extensive leadership to both the church/parachurch community at large and the academic guild beyond certain (select) officially published works (for example, committee boards, dissertation supervisions, etc.).²

Lastly, a more thorough biography of different aspects of Konkel's home and personal life, including the not-insignificant import of his family's Mennonite background and their (not without plight) trek to Canada from Ukraine, would not have been disappointing had they been included. Arguably, such detail(s) would

2 A relatively up-to-date exposé of some of these matters can be found via the McMaster Divinity College website, <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/faculty-and-administration/august-h-konkel/>.

have offered further texture/nuance to the full scope of Gus' theological underpinnings and, perhaps, some aspects of his evolved sense of community.¹

These infelicities aside, there is much to commend within *Community: Biblical and Theological Reflections in honor of August H. Konkell*. Editors Rick Wadholm Jr. and Megan D. Musy should be commended for their fine effort(s) in honoring this unparalleled scholar. I stand in (hearty!) agreement with Mark J. Boda who maintains: "Gus Konkell has spent a lifetime grappling with . . . texts . . . and has consistently displayed his commitment to guiding contemporary readers, young and old, gently but firmly, to understand more accurately the biblical texts. I, for one, am thankful for all his work in the past and in the years to come" (41).

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Julie Faith Parker. *Eve Isn't Evil: Feminist Readings of the Bible to Upend Our Assumptions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023. Pp. 204. ISBN 978-1-5409-6539-4. \$22.99 (USD) paper.

Eve Isn't Evil: Feminist Readings of the Bible to Upend our Assumptions by Julie Faith Parker is an excellent introduction to feminist interpretations that falls short of its intent to be a widely accessible introduction that requires no prior knowledge of the Bible, due to its uneven and at times dishonest presentation of trends and consensus of thought in biblical studies. Julie Faith Parker is a visiting scholar at Union Theological Seminary and biblical scholar in residence at Marble Collegiate Church.

Parker begins her book with a brief introduction in which she anecdotally shares with the audience the story of how she came to write *Eve Isn't Evil* as well as her methodology and her working definition of "feminism". In each of the chapters of the body of the book (chs. 2-9) Parker picks a book or section of books from the Hebrew Bible, except for chapter nine which examines the Gospels and

1 As Dr. August H. Konkell himself relates: "My mother was a refugee from Ukraine in 1926 when she was three years old. Her parents, Jacob and Elizabeth Berg, came with two children, Jacob and Aganeta (my mother) through Latvia to London, then Liverpool to Montreal, eventually settling in Rhine, on a farm near Yorkton, quite isolated from their Mennonite Brethren heritage. My parents met at the Springside Baptist Church after the war. My dad was born here near Springside in 1911, struggled through the depression and then the war. Marriage became possible in 1947. Their children (in order) were August, Jacob (deceased Oct. 2021), Melvin (pastor at Moosomin), Verna (husband Peter pastors in Winkler), Ben (on the home farm), David, Stanley, Clarence and Martha. The youngest four now all live near Springside. For the record, I grew up in the best possible home and became a preacher I am sure only because that was the prayer of my parents. They made no secret of telling me that was their prayer and I made no secret of the fact God would not answer that prayer as they thought. I was an engineer. But prayer changes things. The transition detail from engineer happened after a summer of camp work with CSSM (now Hope) when I was invited to pastor an AGC country church where I pastored a year before going back to theological studies." Private communiqué.

the life of Jesus, and through a mixture of personal storytelling and biblical scholarship she seeks to show how the Bible has been misinterpreted and wielded to ostracize and oppress women as well as other minorities, but can be redeemed to provide good, constructive meaning. This mixture of personal experience and biblical scholarship results in balanced and in many ways spiritually devotional chapters that introduce their audience to the often-empowering result of a feminist reading. Parker in her work takes a very open view as to what “feminism” is. Instead of attempting to position herself among one of the waves of feminism or aligning herself with a set of specific scholars, she simply defines feminism as, “liberty and justice for all”. (5) The book then ends with a chapter in which she recapitulates her previous chapters while removing the anecdotal material and presenting it with a more traditional academic approach. *Eve Isn't Evil* then also contains two helpful appendices at the end. The first appendix provides a crash course in how to understand the Bible and its intricacies. Parker briefly covers the questions of “Who, what, where, when, why, and how” in regard to the formation and purpose of the Bible. She also provides helpful charts that briefly cover the key themes and characters of each book of the Bible including the deuterocanonical books. The second appendix is a helpful annotated bibliography that is intended to point her readers to further resources on feminist interpretations.

There is a lot to be positive about when considering *Eve Isn't Evil*. Parker is engaging, accessible, and makes reading her book a joy. Her vulnerability as she shares parts of her life story garners trust and will connect with many of her readers as they consider their own life stories and how the Bible speaks to those. Parker also makes feminism something accessible. She does not engage in discussions regarding historical movements, waves of feminism, or the impact of key feminist thinkers. Parker instead simplifies feminism to be about fair and inclusionary practice for all. This simple, yet powerful, definition makes a space of welcoming and self-reflection. Lastly, Parker should also be applauded for her ability to make the nuanced and often complicated world of biblical interpretation accessible. She notes in her introduction that she wrote *Eve Isn't Evil* with the goal that no prior knowledge of the Bible was necessary. Parker partially succeeds in this lofty goal of creating an accessible introduction to feminist readings.

Parker in *Eve Isn't Evil* attempts to write in a way that both introduces feminist readings and the broader world of biblical scholarship. She notes in her introduction that the reader will, “increase your knowledge of the Bible and be introduced to cutting-edge scholarship” (7-8). However, this is one area in which Parker seems to do a disservice to her audience as she seems to represent the interpretive possibilities of a text often poorly in favor of her feminist readings and interpretations. One example of this is when Parker discusses Job's wife and the interpretive claim translators often make when they translate *Barekh* as “curse” as opposed

to its more common meaning of “bless”. Parker asserts that this is due to interpretive choice that directly villainizes Job’s wife. However, she only notes in passing that *Barekh* is a common euphemism for “curse”.² Parker seems to purposefully underplay the common understanding that *Barekh* in this instance is a euphemism so that her feminist reading is stronger. This seems like a disservice to Parker’s audience who may not be oriented to the world of biblical studies and/or know any Hebrew. The reader is now left with a skewed understanding of what scholars have regarding a usually common consensus concerning this passage.³

Another poignant example of this is when Parker asserts that Gen 1:26 indicates that there is a fluidity of gender and a spectrum of possibility. Her interpretation hinges on the idea that when God states “let us make humankind in *our* image, according to *our* likeness” (original emphasis) in Gen 1:26 that the uncertainty of *our* must indicate an unknown plurality which she interprets to mean that gender is non-binary. Now this is not a critique regarding Parker’s stance on gender or sex, but it is misleading as she mentions no other interpretive possibility. She does not mention the “royal we” or other interpretive possibilities that are often more accepted in the broader field of biblical studies. Despite Parker’s excellent feminist readings, *Eve Isn’t Evil* does not represent the world and broader literature of biblical studies well which is a disservice to her readers when one of her expressed goals is to introduce her audience to biblical scholarship as well as feminist readings.

In conclusion, *Eve Isn’t Evil* by Julie Faith Parker is a step in the right direction. Her mixture of personal storytelling and biblical scholarship is both generally informative and well-written. Parker also has a gift for making the world of biblical studies and feminism both relevant and easy to grasp. However, it is only tentatively that I can recommend this book. As noted above there are several times in which Parker seems to undervalue or omit common consensus in biblical scholarship so as to better support her feminist readings. For the beginning students or those with no academic training in biblical studies this may leave them with a misinformed picture of biblical scholarship. Despite its positive qualities, *Eve Isn’t Evil* may not be the best or most suitable introduction to biblical studies from a feminist lens for the beginning students due to this consistent and troubling interpretive choice.

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2 See Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 250–251, for further discussion of Hebrew Euphemisms.

3 See David Clines, *Job 1-20* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1989), 50–53, for an interpretation that both takes seriously the understanding that *Barekh* is a euphemism and does not villainize Job’s wife.

Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala. *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible: Toward a Refined Literary Criticism*. Resources for Biblical Study 97. Atlanta: SBL, 2022. Pp. xii + 598. ISBN 978-1-6283-7403-2. \$87.00 (USD) paper.

Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala (hereafter MP) build on their well-established expertise in the scribal changes evident in the compositional history of the Hebrew Bible¹ in their new monograph, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible* (hereafter *ETHB*). Their introduction clearly identifies their approach and major claims. They seek to use the evidence provided by the variant readings in the ancient versions of the Hebrew Bible to establish models for how scribes intentionally altered the text over time. Because of the frequency of places where the Old Greek (hereafter OG) preserves earlier readings than the Masoretic Text (hereafter MT), they reject the assumption of MT priority and insist that the most original reading must always be determined by weighing all possible witnesses on a case-by-case basis. MP argue that these editorial modifications were “unevenly and unsystematically distributed” (9), thus placing their framework in opposition to models that favor “comprehensive redactions of entire books” (11). MP also part ways with current streams of scholarship that focus chiefly on the final forms of biblical books due to the supposed hopelessness of reconstructing compositional layers and their dates with any certainty. They instead suggest that their empirical method can provide a reliable foundation from which to conduct these investigations.

The main body chapters of this book consist of collections of case studies that document different types of editorial activity. MP first cover different cases of additions. Successive chapters handle “Single Words and Short Phrases,” “Single Sentences and Expressions” (by far the longest chapter), “Small Sections, Scenes, and Clusters of Connected Sentences,” “Larger Passages,” and “Results.” Following these, MP provide chapters gathering cases of “Omissions,” “Replacements,” and “Transpositions.” The case studies are conducted with a consistent format. Helpful charts illustrate the exact variant readings in an accessible way, alternative explanations are considered, the type of change is discussed, and MP reflect on whether the change could be detected in the absence of documentary evidence.

For example, one of the case studies is the passage present in the MT but absent in the OG in Jer 25:1, **הָיָא הַשָּׁנָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה לְנְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל**, (“it was the first year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon”). MP note that this clause is

1 Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala, and Bas ter Haar Romeny, *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible* (RBS 75. Atlanta: SBL, 2014); Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala, eds., *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?* (CBET 84. Leuven: Peeters, 2017).

clearly intrusive in its context, since the next verse begins with a relative pronoun that clearly points back to material prior to this clause. In this case, MP observe that MT Jeremiah contains many more references to Babylon than does OG Jeremiah. They consider arguments for this material being deliberately omitted from the OG and find them unconvincing. They conclude that this clause is “a typical expansion of chronological detail, and is also part of a wider revision that increased the importance and involvement of the Babylonians throughout Jeremiah” (185). This conclusion is particularly interesting since it runs counter to their general tendency to be skeptical of systematic changes made throughout a text.

The conclusion chapter begins with MP’s contention that the MT contained more editorial activity than the translations, and that the scribal changes they categorized are consistently found through the variety of ancient witnesses. They also reinforce their major conclusion that the most common type of scribal change involved piecemeal additions, as opposed to popular redactional models that seek to identify large-scale “layers” throughout a text. MP assert that the “conservative attitude” and “principle of avoiding omissions” (536) taken by the scribes who copied the Hebrew Bible make its transmission and resultant “multilayered” (538) nature unique in world literature, and that this process of expansion cannot be illuminated by comparison with any other ancient texts. Regarding the question of whether their findings would lend themselves to the detection of editorial activity not documented in the extant textual record, they conclude that while “omissions, replacements, and transpositions” (540) cannot be identified with certainty, additions to the text that function by “introducing new ideas” (540) “*could be detected and reconstructed with reasonable accuracy*” (541, *italics original*). MP then reiterate their optimism about the viability of the task of historical criticism when approached using their empirical method, advocate for the use of textual criticism as a starting point for source criticism, and call for the creation of a “synopsis and its commentary for the main textual traditions of the Hebrew Bible” (548) to aid scholars in gathering the necessary preliminary data for such studies.

The model proposed in *ETHB* substantially challenges many of the dominant critical paradigms in current research. But does it successfully offer a viable alternative? The crucial assumption adopted by MP is that the variant readings available in the extant ancient versions (particularly the OG as compared to the MT) serve as a reliable guide for how earlier scribes edited texts,² to the exclusion of other patterns of editing evident in ANE literature more broadly. Their confidence in their ability to uncover earlier, undocumented glosses in the text is

2 In their words, “. . . there is little to suggest a fundamental difference between changes documented in text-critical evidence as variant readings and (mostly earlier) changes not witnessed as variants but that are postulated by literary criticism” (3).

notable when compared to the stances of previous scholars who have pursued this avenue of inquiry.³ Additionally, their mode of argumentation may lead some readers to suspect that they have not fully grappled with the evidence advanced by scholars more positive towards models derived from ANE scribal activity (their short critique of Ziemer on pp. 18–19 notwithstanding). For example, Person and Rezetko compile examples from both ANE works and the Hebrew Bible to argue that scribal editing, by its very nature, tended to wipe out the evidence of such editing along the way, making further reconstructions futile.⁴ Similarly, van der Toorn documents the logistical problems inherent in the kind of constant, piecemeal insertions envisaged by MP, arguing that such “expansion” could only take place “as an activity in the context of a new edition.”⁵ Van der Toorn also challenges MP’s contention that the perception of the Hebrew Bible as “holy” by its scribes resulted in it being transmitted in a different way than other ANE texts (see p. 18), as he documents similar conceptions of revelation in Mesopotamia.⁶

In conclusion, *ETHB* is an important work that will be essential reading for all serious students and scholars interested in the question of the compositional history of the Hebrew Bible. The case studies alone are a treasure trove of examples of textual criticism in action, and much valuable information is contained in the theoretical sections as well (such as the arguments against current models of transmission based on orality on pp. 23–27). While it will inevitably receive push-back from advocates of alternative approaches, the difficulty of such dialogue between vastly different paradigms should be a spur for all involved to better support their respective positions with demonstrable evidence.

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3 For example, William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (ICC. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1986), gives a detailed explanation of his model of scribal composition. He likewise uses the longer readings in the MT as compared to the LXX to identify scribal expansions in the stages of the Hebrew text earlier than that preserved by the LXX. However, when he lists his proposed interpolations that lack manuscript evidence, he admits, “These results rest on nothing more than my judgment and critical acumen; on my nose for secondary processes of expansion which have been superimposed on a shorter, more original, Hebrew text” (li).

4 Raymond F. Person Jr. and Robert Rezetko, “Introduction: The Importance of Empirical Models to Assess the Efficacy of Source and Redaction Criticism,” in Raymond F. Person Jr. and Robert Rezetko, eds., *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism* (AIL 25; Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 1–35 (23, 35).

5 Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 126.

6 van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 205–206.

Clair Linzey. *Developing Animal Theology: An Engagement With Leonardo Boff*. London: Routledge, 2022. Pp. xii + 205. ISBN 978-1-0320-7157-2. \$53.00 (USD) hardcover.

There is much talk about “cosmic redemption,” a divine “plan to restore all things,” and “creation, fall, redemption” in Christian theology. Strangely, this entire discourse usually excludes any concern for trillions of sentient creatures known as “animals.” Over the past half-century, the seminal work of Andrew Linzey has unfolded these problems and offered new discourses, reinterpretations of texts, and ethical and theological models that critically engage this issue. Continuing and developing in this tradition is Clair Linzey’s recent, scholarly and engaging work *Developing Animal Theology: An Engagement With Leonardo Boff*.¹

Boff is a highly influential, progressive-leaning Catholic thinker in Brazil who was interviewed by Linzey—along with a variety of persons and groups in Brazil regarding their views of Boff, animal theology, ethics, and ecology. The book sets out to (a) evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Boff’s ethics in light of a more critical, informed, and forward-looking perspective, and (b) provide an animal-friendly theological reconstruction.

The first chapters look at several of the typical issues surrounding this topic—animal “souls,” the implications of the Genesis account and creation theologies in church history, the scope of moral reasoning, animal suffering and sentience, and the looming problem of anthropocentrism. In chapter 2 and the following chapters that form the heart of the book (chs 3-5), Linzey finds a continual pattern throughout not just Boff’s work but in countless theologians and thinkers, and the pattern largely consists of either (a) pure ignorance or negligence (e.g., animals and animal suffering has no place or mention in the framework) or (b) continual dismissal or downplaying against the priority of human existence (i.e., endless “but...” qualifiers). In a variety of Catholic thinkers and otherwise (see chs 2-3), humans are elevated because of their consciousness—as if conscious animals were not conscious. Human superior intelligence/sentience is frequently twisted into a legitimation for violence against animals instead of a moral obligation to take care of the vulnerable (11, 32). “Again,” Linzey writes at one point, “here the underlying argument is that treating animals well is good for humans but that animals’ welfare can be secondary to issues of human justice” (34). “Respecting nature” (65) is found in the Catholic tradition, but it never seems to terminate in a call for the obvious implication: vegetarianism and/or veganism. And so on it goes. Contrary to how many frame such pro-animal scholars, Linzey’s

1 Both Clair and her father Andrew currently operate the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics.

expectations for at least *some* engagement and *some* consistency are a rather low bar that few have apparently tried to cross.

As one reads through the book it becomes apparent that the specter of Aristotle's philosophy ceaselessly haunts the western and Christian religious world through the commanding influence of Augustine and Aquinas. It frequently squashes any concern of humans to intentionally protect the well-being of non-human creatures. Anthropocentrism rules the day; a superior soul and "rational" nature simply subordinates animals to humans in every way, or at least limits the boundaries of human compassion. The predominant model ultimately says, "love no further." "Salvation," "sin," "peace," "love"—all the central aspects of traditional Christian theology and soteriology are developed to exclude concern for animals. Even in progressive liberation theology, animals find little to no place—despite the obvious fact that "Animals are in need of liberation as well as humans... [meaning] freedom from pain, suffering, oppression, and indeed predation itself" (56; cf. 68). And this problem goes beyond religious language. "Humanizing the world'," for example, "is a double-edged notion, since it implies an extension of human power rather than its renunciation" (69). Readers learn that ecology, too, serves to undermine any concern for mass animal suffering and exploitation because ecology sacrifices individual experiences of suffering in search for a "balanced" whole.

Like any Christian theology engaging in its tradition, Linzey offers a compelling revisitation of Trinitarianism in chapter 7. But it is more than a reflection; it is a full-scale remodeling similar to the approach of Sallie McFague's *Models of God* (where God is proposed to be Lover, Savior, Friend, in light of the ecological and nuclear age). Linzey's proposal is to think of God as particular *hypostases* (a better and older term than "persons" she says) of Gentleness, Solidarity, and Fraternity.

Given that theology is ... born of a context, the first task of the theologian must be to open her eyes to the reality around her, the reality for the marginalized, including the marginalized in God's nonhuman creation. This is possible only with the help of Fraternity guiding our sight. In terms of animals, we ought to begin first by seeing them as God's creatures and second by seeing the reality of their lives. (159)

Given how the current world operates—especially after five-hundred years of colonialism—this is a real challenge of sight indeed: to see abnormality in what most people consider normal, and to see dignity in what people regularly commodify and consume without thinking. But this Trinitarian model is not just for the sake of theology, for "religious attitudes towards animals underpin general ideas about animals. Instrumentalist and anthropocentric thinking about animals cannot be

overcome without confronting the underlying Thomistic theology that grounds that thinking” (161). Thomism, of course, is just one model among others and, because it has been so destructive for so long, deserves continual interrogation.

Developing Animal Theology is a real challenge for people in Brazil (and beyond) where the society and culture is very meat-centered and animal suffering is exceptional (including sacrifice; see Appendices), and the book’s theses extend wherever theology functions to order society and animals are exploited. It was also challenging for me by having family members in the industrial livestock industry, raised on a farm and ranch, and ultimately shaped by what James Blaut calls “the colonizer’s model of the world”² (the world, which is “outside,” exists for my conquering—land, animals, people, etc.) Linzey inquires whether this dominant perspective is either necessary or good, even for humans. The Golden Rule of Jesus, when expanded to include non-human persons or creatures, seems radical and pertinent. To quote the revolutionary slogan, “The war isn’t over until we’re *all* free.”

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2 James Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993).

Ryan C. Lambert. *The Weird Apostle*. North Haven, CT: Ryan Lambert Forum, 2024. Pp. 234. ISBN 979-8-2183-6900-2. \$22.99 (USD) paper.

Until fairly recently, both Christian and Jewish scholarship has almost uniformly understood Paul as being primarily responsible for the creation of “Christianity,” understood as a new religious phenomenon whose defining characteristics are found in the ways that it has wholly transcended Judaism. Accordingly, Paul—so it has been confidently asserted—left behind Judaism, his Jewish identity, and, of course, the law (i.e., Torah) for Jesus Christ, through whom he received the “grace and mercy his soul never found in Judaism” (6).

Taking his cue from the title of the first chapter of Matthew Thiessen’s *A Jewish Paul*, in *The Weird Apostle* Ryan C. Lambert sets out to “make Paul weird again” (6), by which he means interpreting him and his mission in their original sociohistorical context, with the result that his Jewish identity is seen as thoroughly informative to his apostolic mission and teaching contained in his letters. Lambert writes, “Historically, Paul has been made to appear like a Western-minded, modern Christian. In this book, I challenge those largely uncontested ideas, suggesting Paul was a Torah-observant Jewish man who functioned entirely within Judaism as the apostle to the Gentiles” (7).

Written for a popular audience, Lambert’s argument unfolds over 10 chapters, with each of the first 9 chapters representing an aspect of Paul that has been

largely misinterpreted in the Christian tradition, and thus requires a more accurate, contextually-sensitive (“weird”) lens for properly understanding him.

In chapter 1, Lambert puts the lie to the notion that the Pharisees were rigid, “legalistic” hypocrites that represented as a group and in their teachings the antithesis of the Christ movement. Paul did not abandon his Pharisaic upbringing and identity. It remained, rather, instrumental to his apostolic career and convictions regarding Jesus Christ and the implications of his coming.

Lambert argues in chapters 2–3 that Paul was foremost “called” to be an apostle of Jesus Christ to the gentiles; he was not converted from Judaism to Christianity. His mission was to take a Jewish gospel to non-Jews, with the result that these gentiles—while retaining their ethnic identity as distinct from Jews—would nevertheless adopt a worldview shaped by the Judaism of Paul’s time. Moreover, instead of representing independent groups consisting of adherents to a new religious movement called Christianity, the communities of Christ followers that Paul founded “were likely still synagogue subgroups” (60).

This decidedly Jewish movement’s prohibition against idolatry would inevitably marginalize the gentiles who joined it, as they were not afforded the same social exemptions provided Jewish communities throughout the Empire (e.g., abstention from cultic activities deemed by them as idolatrous), leaving them vulnerable to persecution for failing to honor the gods to the perceived detriment of the greater civic communities of which they were also a part.

In chapter 4, Lambert introduces some of the key findings of the New Perspective on Paul, pointing out that Paul’s gospel had nothing to do with opposing the supposed “works-righteousness” system of Judaism or the Torah in general. Rather, it had everything to do with transforming pagan idolaters into “holy ones” of God and status equals, then, with God’s covenant people Israel (88). Lambert also points here to the eschatological pilgrimage tradition contained in prophetic texts like Isaiah 2:1–4 as shaping Paul’s vision of his mission to the gentiles.

In chapter 5, Lambert delves into the interpretive distance necessary in understanding Paul’s instructions in light of his “apocalyptic” worldview (101), including preeminently Christ’s imminent return, which informs such teaching. Given this temporal context (i.e., “Paul’s weird view of time”) along with the fact that Paul’s historical expectations went unmet, his readers must appreciate “that he did not write his letters for you, me, or any generation beyond his own” (107). Caution, then, needs to be exercised when interpreting his instructions as normative for contemporary communities of faith. Lambert poses, “Perhaps Paul would have thought differently about certain topics if he felt he had more time” (108–109).

I would briefly suggest, however, that Paul’s belief in the imminent return of Christ conforms to an ancient Mediterranean view of time that understood past,

present, and future more fluidly. The reality of Christ's own resurrection would necessarily mean for Paul that the general resurrection, final judgment, and other concomitant eschatological events were *already* on the horizon, regardless of the actual amount of time that might transpire between them. While appropriate hermeneutical distance and sociohistorical contextualization is always warranted, in my opinion, nothing Paul teaches in his letters is fundamentally affected by the failure of the Parousia to happen in his generation.

Chapters 6–7 represent a two-part exploration into “Paul’s weird lifestyle,” whereby Lambert points out that while Paul opposed full Torah observance for gentiles in Christ, which would mean their proselytism to Judaism, he in no way suggested that Jews should not continue in such practices. Further still, Lambert argues that Paul himself remained a Torah-observant Jew who maintained a positive view of the Jerusalem Temple as well.

Chapters 8–9 are a two-part explanation of “Paul’s weird rule” contained in 1 Cor 7:17–20. According to this text, a central and consistent feature of Paul’s teaching to the Christ communities he founded was that persons should remain as they are—that is, in Christ, Jews should remain Jews, and gentiles should remain gentiles. The implication for Lambert is that Paul supported “difference without discrimination” (181).

Chapter 9 focuses on the Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15, in which it is decided by the leadership that gentiles did not have to proselytize to Judaism to enter the Christ movement. However, there still was an expectation for them to observe a limited number of Torah ordinances to be members in good standing. Importantly here, that Jews in Christ would continue to live as Jews, including of course their full Torah obedience, is assumed as a given.

Lambert explains in chapter 10 that his objective in this book is to make a modest “1-percent improvement” (200) in the perception of Paul for both Christian and Jewish audiences, in the conviction that with more work done in this area a series of small changes will eventually add up to a quite significant one in the interpretation of Paul, leading to, among other things, improved Jewish—Christian relations.

In a postscript, Lambert promises a follow-up volume on this topic.

I do not believe I am exaggerating to say that *The Weird Apostle* is in my estimation one of the most important books on Paul written at the popular level in the modern era. I have encountered few works that have been able to articulate in an entirely accessible and quite entertaining fashion such critical matters for properly understanding the thoroughly Jewish orientation of Paul’s gospel and teaching (along with that of the Christ movement in toto), as well as Paul’s own continuing Jewish identity as the apostle to the gentiles, the general importance he places on the integrity of both Jewish and gentile identity in Christ, and thus

the significance of unity and equality amid diversity within the Christ movement.

As such, there is much to agree with in this book, and very little to dispute. In addition to my qualified objection above regarding Paul's view of time, one area in which I would have preferred greater clarity is on the question of the relationship between Paul's gospel and the Jewish people. While Lambert does suggest that the gospel of Jesus Christ is no less intended for the Jews than for the gentiles, the rationale presented for its necessity seems obscured, namely, that Israel too is in bondage to sin and death and requires the liberation only found in Christ Jesus. Readers might infer instead that something along the lines of a soft two-covenant soteriology is being advanced, in which Jews should embrace Jesus as the Messiah but failure to do so is nevertheless of no real threat to their place in the covenant. I do not believe Paul thought or taught that (cf. esp. Rom 2:9, 25–29; 3:9–20; 9:2, 6; 9:30–10:4; 11:17–24). Rather, he is in my view quite clear that failure to embrace the climax of God's love and faithfulness in Jesus Christ ultimately disqualifies one—whether s/he is Jewish or gentile—from the renewed covenant and creation.

Another area where I find disagreement concerns Paul's use of the second person plural in his letters. As argued by John Gager and Lloyd Gaston, Lambert suggests that when Paul speaks of "we" in certain contexts, he is intending to identify with his gentile converts to the gospel (132). On the contrary, I think Paul is identifying with members of the covenant, be they Jewish or gentile. In this way, on the one hand, Paul can speak inclusively to both Jews and gentiles about the realities of God's past dealings with his historic covenant people, Israel, prior to the coming of Christ. And, on the other hand, he can fully assume that Israel, while having possessed a provisional status of righteousness in the prior age, are finally "righteoused" and therefore find the life that Torah promises—just as with gentiles—exclusively in the Messiah *now* that he has come, and the promises to Israel and all creation are being fulfilled.

Paul's supposed "anti-Torah" statements disappear not by removing Jews from the picture, but when one takes seriously the salvation-historical contrast that Paul is drawing between the ages (e.g., "under the Torah" vs. "under grace")—with the former age understood as co-opted by sin and death and thus the live threat of Torah's condemnation of death for failure to observe it. He is not, then, speaking here to Torah-informed praxis, which is still clearly relevant for him—indeed, fully empowered—in the new Messianic age characterized by the Spirit (cf., e.g., Ezek 36:24–32; Jer 31:31–34; Isa 44:1–5; 59:21; Deut 30:1–6), whether in terms of a full submission for Jews or limited one for gentiles.

Again, notwithstanding these small criticisms, *The Weird Apostle* is simply an excellent book that is fully capable of meeting Lambert's desire to inspire a

reversal of popular perceptions of Paul as a denouncer of Judaism. It is highly recommended for anyone interested in Christianity or Judaism, the New Testament, or Pauline Studies specifically, and could even serve as a companion text for the formal study of Paul at the undergraduate or seminary level.

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