

The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History: Locating a Tradition in Ancient Israel. By Brian Neil Peterson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014, xiv + 395 pp., \$34.00.

The background, authorship, and growth of the extensive section of the OT known as the Historical Books form no small aspect of OT biblical criticism. From Deuteronomy to 2 Kings, these texts recount Israel's early history with both detail and artistry, and are in many ways the beating heart of OT theology. For this reason, bound to the intricate issues related to these books, often known as the "Deuteronomistic History" (DtrH), is a host of critical implications. While the prevailing winds of OT scholarship blow stiffly in one direction, Brian Neil Peterson has produced a volume that heads persistently in another.

In the introduction to his project, Peterson frames his investigation in terms of a "whodunit?" mystery novel. His aim is not only to establish a cogently argued alternative view of the Historical Books, but even to posit authorship of (a) specific individual(s), an endeavor rarely attempted in favor of concepts like the "Elohists" or a "school of 'X.'" By examining "intertextual clues, possible character motives, and the historical opportunity in general," Peterson posits that "Abiathar the priest [of Anathoth], his sons Jonathan and Ahimelech, their priestly descendants, and finally Jeremiah and Baruch" each had a hand in authoring and editing the DtrH (p. 3). Peterson thus wishes to historicize the DtrH.

The book unfolds in two parts. In the first, Peterson provides an extensive orientation to scholarly trends in views of the authorship, date, and influences on the DtrH (pp. 7–117). Starting in chapter 1 with the work of Martin Noth, Peterson situates the reader in the current scholarly discussion of the DtrH. In this chapter, Peterson also articulates his holistic and synchronic approach to the canonical text, bypassing what he sees as the "slugfest" of redaction-critical debates on the microtextual level (p. 8). In short, the predominant, but often modified, consensus view of the DtrH is that it was compiled by an author (the "Deuteronomist") in the mid-6th c. BC from earlier, fragmented sources. This was prompted by the "discovery" of the Book of the Law (=Deut. 4:44–30:20) by Hilkiah (2 Kgs 22:8–10) chiefly to explain the failure of the monarchy and Israel's exile, and thereby furnish an apology for Josiah's reform.

Peterson draws attention to the disagreement and near "pan-Deuteronomism" among OT scholars. To him this situation suggests the need for a new evaluation of whether the DtrH may have originated from an earlier period in Israel's history, namely the time of Abiathar, David's high priest, after which the DtrH underwent subsequent editorial expansions. In chapter 2, Peterson substantiates this approach by examining Noth's work and the ways in which his own views of the DtrH partially align with Noth. This prompts Peterson to reevaluate other claims made by Noth that have become axiomatic.

Chief among these claims is a late date for Deuteronomy, with which Peterson interacts in chapter 3. He resists a late date for the book on the basis of what he understands as Deuteronomy's second millennium BC Hittite treaty structure. While Peterson acknowledges that his position "may turn off some readers," he expresses hope that his arguments will "speak for themselves" as he posits an alter-

native theory (p. 63). In chapter 4, Peterson examines key grammatical constructions as they occur throughout the DtrH, such as *בעבר הירדן* and *עדהיום הזה*. Examining each occurrence with regard to chronology and geography, and interacting closely with Jeffrey Geoghegan's similar analyses (see p. 113), Peterson suggests the fittingness of these phrases for authorship by Abiathar and the subsequent Anathothian priests, including Jeremiah. Peterson maintains that "very few" of the phrases could be satisfyingly situated after a 6th c. BC time frame (p. 112).

In part 2, Peterson moves into a chapter-by-chapter, systematic investigation of the editing of Deuteronomy and each book of the DtrH. His goal is "to determine how, if at all, the priestly authors from Anathoth may have influenced their content and shaping" (p. 121). To do this, Peterson focuses on "macro thematic and rhetorical indicators that point to authorial perspective," providing a considerable amount of exegetical detail as well (p. 262). Peterson is cautious in his analysis, occasionally conceding that a given point is "inconclusive," (e.g. pp. 131, 140), yet identifying many textual features that firmly support his thesis. For example, in his treatment of the book of Judges (chap. 7), Peterson forcefully argues that the book is "an anti-Saulide polemic ... commissioned by David at Hebron" that underwent later editing before incorporation into the DtrH (p. 197). He proceeds to examine how David's high priest, Abiathar, "had the necessary qualifications, the motive [cf. 1 Sam. 22:14–15], and opportunity to write Judges as a means to draw a war-torn nation together under the banner of one king" (p. 197). Peterson finds in the following DtrH books similar "hints" at authorship.

In conclusion, Peterson rightly reminds the reader that to exclude *a priori* the possibility of an early date for the DtrH "serve[s] only to hamstring open debate" (p. 297). In contrast to the prevailing scholarly view, he proposes that the thematic and ideological diversity in the DtrH is best explained as "a history preserved over a long period of time that was reworked some time shortly after the fall of Judah, with final notations added c. 560 BCE" (p. 298). This position alleviates the need to posit a single theological purpose for the entire DtrH, as it served various needs along the course of its editorial history; yet it is unified by its authors' task of accurately preserving Israel's history.

There is much to commend in this volume, which will primarily benefit biblical studies scholars and students. Despite a few grammatical oddities (e.g. "points up" often for "points out" [e.g. pp. 110, 182 n. 64, 200, 274], overuse of exclamation marks), in terms of content Peterson has made cogent arguments for re-evaluating key aspects of the conventional view of the DtrH. Peterson's synchronic approach and his desire to ground the study in actual history are refreshing in the context of this debate. His approach permits the valuable analysis of editorial phrases to justify the subsequent analysis of each book. This in turn also establishes credibility for taking an early view of the composition of the DtrH. Hopefully, Peterson's volume will generate further scholarly conversation in at least this respect.

Peterson's case for Abiathar *et al.* as original authors is a cumulative one and, while plausible, will certainly face criticism from the broader academy. Nevertheless, Peterson builds a firm argument overall for an early *Sitz im Leben* for the authorship of the DtrH, and his volume has strengthened the warrant for holding such a view.

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Ruth, By James McKeown. Two Horizons OT Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015, x + 152 pp., \$22.00 paper.

James McKeown's *Ruth*, as his Preface acknowledges, is in some sense a Genesis-influenced interpretation. The assignment to write it for the Two Horizons OT Commentary series followed immediately upon his completing another (published in March 2008) on Genesis. The two horizons to which the series attends are the past and the present. From the variety of their own theological perspectives scholars address what their assigned biblical book has meant and now means. On the one hand, they consider how it may have spoken to and been seen to reflect its Greco-Roman and canonical context, as also how it has been interpreted through the centuries. On the other hand, they elaborate on how the book's message may contribute to life and living in our diverse twenty-first century world.

McKeown's *Ruth* commentary consists of four major sections, one more than his *Genesis* commentary, and as with others in the series, includes no numbered or lettered sequence (e.g. I, II, III or A, B, C, D) for ordering or identifying chapters or subunits. The first dozen pages answer questions of authorship, date, purpose, genre, and outline, following which McKeown comments, one-by-one, on the twenty paragraphs into which he divides the book. Pages 71–110 treat "Theological Horizons"; and final commentary on "Theological Issues, Themes, and Approaches" occupies another thirty pages. A bibliography and two indices (one of authors, one of references to biblical texts and other ancient writings) conclude the book.

McKeown's commentary, primarily aimed at Christian leaders, may, for its transparency, be equally accessible to those of no considerable biblical familiarity or theological sophistication. His summary of the book points up its appeal to a very wide audience today though it may suggest more alignment with the OT book of Job than with most other biblical books: "The book encourages its readers not to panic during the dark times when God seems far away but to wait expectantly and to keep faith in him" (p. 69).

As mentioned, McKeown, in writing on *Ruth*, is very conscious of *Genesis*. There is much to be admired in his sensitivity to comparisons and contrasts between *Genesis* and *Ruth* in terms of theological horizons, issues, themes, and approaches. Multiple similarities between the books, admirably brought out in this commentary, include the pervasive emphasis on "the seed" or descendant in *Genesis* (12:1–3) and the climax on the same in *Ruth* (4:12, 18–22). There is also the comparison of the chosen and not chosen (see particularly pp. 73–75). *Genesis* juxtaposes a good and wicked Lamech, and a noble Enoch, descendant of Seth,