

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

### BIBLICAL STUDIES

Jason S. DeRouchie, ed., *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus' Bible*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2013. Pp. 496. \$45.99, cloth.

This volume is an overview of the entire OT, with book-by-book treatments contributed by a number of authors. It has been organized under the categories of Law, Prophets, and Writings, the order of the Jewish canon (cf. Luke 24:44) in an attempt “to show the theological significance of this structure” (p. 23). The volume, a companion to Kregel’s *What the New Testament Authors Really Cared About* (2008), is aimed at college or seminary students and local churches, and is designed to be “manageable” and “message-driven” (p. 23).

The stated goal of the book is to present “the essence of what is revealed in the OT, with a conscious eye toward the fulfillment found in Jesus as clarified in the New Testament” (p. 13). As such it is written “from a conservative, evangelical perspective,” and intentionally refrains from presenting a history of Israelite religion, synthesizing sources behind the text, or surveying a theology of the HB per se, among other endeavors (cf. p. 23). Rather, the OT is distinctly understood as the progressive revelatory foundation of the NT, which itself behaves “like an answer key in the back of a math textbook” (p. 14). Accordingly, the contributors often turn to the NT to “unpack the long-range trajectories that are evident [in the OT]” (p. 14).

Although not the primary focus, each chapter treating a given OT book provides pertinent background information. This includes “authorship and audience, time period, geopolitical context, and purpose,” which “provide[s] the setting for the overview of the book’s message that shapes each chapter’s body” (p. 14). As the title indicates, there is a stress throughout upon “authorial intent as the basis for meaning” (p. 14), while recognizing a difference between the protagonist/speaker of a given book and “the final author/compiler” (p. 15). In the face of this complexity, no book’s author is definitively identified in any chapter, yet each contributor deals briefly with the question of authorship. In this way, it is assumed in this volume that there is coherent authorial intention and shaping in each OT book—at both the levels of composition and compilation—that in its historical context and in relation to the NT itself has a controlling influence upon interpretation.

Each chapter prominently presents the central, authorial message of each OT book in three to six themes, which then act as chapter subheadings. While the OT is explicitly identified as fulfilled only in the NT, a high value is also placed upon the lasting relevance of the OT itself, with frequent sidebars to present helpful insights for contemporary

readers (e.g., pp. 67, 174, 245). The first page of each chapter briefly overviews questions of authorship, date, location, and purpose; key verses are highlighted; and content is illustrated throughout with high-quality photographs, maps, charts, and tables. A brief but sufficiently diverse list of resources for further study and a list of key words are given at the end of each chapter as well. Notably, a set of appendices is provided that includes much valuable information and a thoughtful Bible reading plan.

At the beginning and at each “seam” of the volume, DeRouchie provides an introduction to the relevant section (i.e., “Jesus’ Bible” as a whole, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings). Most broadly, DeRouchie identifies the message of the OT as “God’s kingdom through covenant for his glory, ultimately in Christ” (p. 26). In the introduction, focus falls on the authoritative instruction and covenantal purpose provided by the divine author of the OT, as DeRouchie presents the organizing framework for the entire volume. He identifies seven historical stages as “apparent in God’s kingdom-building program,” which form the acronym KINGDOM (p. 30; see figs. 1.1 and 1.2 where a pictorial version is given). Of these stages, the final two encompass the NT era, leaving the initial five to include five overlapping covenants in the OT. DeRouchie then walks through each of the seven stages, to which the rest of the volume is cohesively tethered by the Law-Prophet-Writings canonical sections (cf. pp. 56, 164, 322).

The present format is prohibitive of a comprehensive review of this valuable resource. DeRouchie and the volume’s contributors have done an excellent job staying focused on their stated task. While not totally ignoring the presence of critical issues in biblical studies, particularly dealing with issues of authorship and dating, these scholars maintain enough distance to treat cogently and helpfully the unity and diversity of scriptural themes in the OT. With an emphasis upon overarching narrative and canonical shaping, treatment of each OT book nevertheless dips selectively into relevant historical and theological matters as well, particularly with respect to the covenants. Given the intended audience, this survey is excellently crafted and hits its target with precision and accuracy throughout. Moreover, the caliber of the contributors as gifted teachers and communicators is evident.

*What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About* will be a wonderful resource and text for college level survey courses, if not introductions, and even interested Sunday school classes. Unlike some similar texts, the use of diagrams and pictures is effective without being tiresome, and, best of all, the pages are not glossy but matte. The volume is perhaps too broad for the seminary level. The authors have done such an effective job of boiling down the best of conservative scholarship that the volume is not suited to more technical and focused coursework except as a supplement. That being said, it will no doubt be of great help to pastors and teachers as they labor to preach and teach Jesus’ Bible in clear and inviting ways, for the glory of God and the good of his people.

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