

where Seitz notes that this was Childs' starting point)?

To sum up my reservations, if the goal is to transform Old Testament studies, then the call for a theological approach that takes the canon seriously treating it as Christian Scripture, important though this is, may not be enough. Let me point out, however, that this criticism should not deter anyone from reading what, I repeat, is a stimulating and thought-provoking collection of essays that deserves to be widely read.

Karl Möller
Cheltenham, England

EuroJTh (2000) 9:1, 89

0960-2720

The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah

T. Desmond Alexander

Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998, 171 pp., £5.99, pb., ISBN 0-85111-575-6

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur montre comment s'élabore progressivement, à travers toute la Bible, le portrait du Messie. Ce livre nourrira la contemplation privée ou pourra servir de base à des groupes d'études bibliques. Mais il lui manque des principes herméneutiques clairs qui pourraient aider le lecteur à bien appréhender la relation entre les deux Testaments et le caractère historique des textes bibliques.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Alexander skizziert in seiner gesamtbiblischen Studie das sich nach und nach entfaltende biblische Portrait des Messias. Das Buch eignet sich für das persönliche Bibelstudium bzw. für die Verwendung in Bibelkreisen; ihm fehlen jedoch hermeneutische Hinweise, die den Lesern helfen würden, das Verhältnis der beiden Testamente zueinander sowie die historische Dimension der biblischen Texte angemessen zu würdigen.

Stressing the centrality of the concept of the Messiah as the unifying theme for both the Old and the New Testament, Alexander outlines its gradual emergence throughout the biblical corpus. Aimed at a general church readership, Alexander's sketch of the Bible's portrait of the Messiah consists of twenty short chapters, each of which is framed by brief summaries and conclusions designed to guide the reader

along. There are also questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each chapter, which make the book a useful tool for private contemplation or for the use in small Bible study groups. A 'further reading list' comes to the aid of those who want to delve deeper.

Alexander's little guide to the Bible's portrait of the Messiah is needed in a Church that is increasingly biblically illiterate, and that struggles to make sense of the Old Testament in particular. While providing a Christian reading of the texts that interprets the Old Testament through the lenses supplied by the New, Alexander is sensitive to the fact that the concept of the Messiah emerged and developed gradually. Yet it is in relation to this point that I have a quibble, for I suspect that readers devoid of Alexander's sensitivity and knowledge will be unlikely to do justice to the texts' historical dimensions. What is lacking in Alexander's treatment is some kind of explicit hermeneutical guidance, perhaps in the form of an additional chapter that explains the relationship between the Testaments, and that alerts readers to the historical dimension of the biblical witness(es).

Karl Möller
Cheltenham, England

EuroJTh (2000) 9:1, 89-91

0960-2720

Isaiah III/2 (Isaiah 49-55)

Jan L. Koole

Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 1998, xxv + 454 pp.; ISBN 90-429-0679-0; no price

RÉSUMÉ

Ce volume appartient à une série qui prend au sérieux le contexte historique des textes bibliques et veut en tenir compte dans l'élaboration d'une théologie chrétienne. On y trouve une nouvelle traduction du texte, et une exégèse très complète embrassant des questions de philologie, d'histoire de l'interprétation, et la préoccupation pour le sens théologique du texte, en particulier dans son rapport avec le Nouveau Testament. Son ampleur dépasse celle de bien des commentaires existants. L'interprétation théologique se situe en gros dans la ligne réformée. La proclamation du salut à toutes les nations par le Serviteur naît de sa mission envers Israël et la prolonge. La question de l'identité du Serviteur reçoit un traitement méticuleux et est comprise à la lumière de la mis-

sion de Christ. L'ouvrage est impressionnant par son étendue, avec un apport important quant à la théologie du texte biblique éclairée par des convictions théologiques chrétiennes solides.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Kooles Kommentar ist Teil einer Reihe, die den historischen Hintergrund des biblischen Textes ernst nimmt und die zudem darauf abzielt, diesen für die christliche Theologie dienstbar zu machen. Der Band bietet neben einer neuen Übersetzung ausgesprochen umfangreiche exegetische Betrachtungen, wobei der philologischen Arbeit, der historischen Auslegung und der theologischen Bedeutung des Textes (vor allem auch der Beziehung zum Neuen Testament) besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet werden. Hinsichtlich seines Umfangs übertrifft er die meisten verfügbaren Kommentare bei weitem. Der theologische Ansatz kann als im weiteren Sinne reformiert gelten. Der Auftrag des Gottesknechts, allen Nationen Heil zu verkünden, entspringt dem ursprünglichen Auftrag an Israel und setzt diesen fort. Die Identität des Gottesknechts wird gründlich erörtert; sie wird jedoch letztlich im Hinblick auf den Auftrag Christi verstanden.

Der Umfang des Werkes ist gewaltig und zeugt von der biblischen Theologie des Autors, die in einer mit Überzeugung vertretenen christlichen Theologie wurzelt. Die Übersetzung ins Englische ist sehr zu begrüßen, da es sich hierbei um eine bedeutende Ergänzung zu den bislang in dieser Sprache zur Verfügung stehenden Jesaja-Kommentaren handelt.

This volume is a translation of Kooles's commentary in Dutch in the *Commentaar op het Oude Testament* (1990). The English series title gives a clue to the character of the commentary. 'In contrast to the ahistorical approach of much contemporary reader-orientated exegesis, in which it is mainly the interaction between the modern reader and the final text that matters, the editors of *HCOT* are committed to an approach which takes seriously the historical embeddedness of the message of the Old Testament' (from the Editorial Preface). They also take the view that the Old Testament 'was and is a vehicle of the knowledge of God' (*ibid.*). On this basis, the series provides a detailed commentary, with a fresh translation. The comment on each passage is divided into a shorter 'Essentials and Perspectives', intended for a non-technical readership, and a rather longer 'Scholarly

Exposition', in which Hebrew and Greek are cited liberally, untransliterated, and commentators are quoted in the original languages, including Latin. This is, therefore, the most serious kind of scholarly interpretation. To comment on the scale alone, the 454 pages devoted here to seven chapters compares with the *Word Commentary's* seventy-two on the same section of Isaiah. In his close exegesis, Kooles shows a sensitivity to a huge range of scholarly interpretation, past and present, Jewish and Christian. On the setting of Isa. 49–55, he is undogmatic, but accepts that the prophet is 'Deutero-Isaiah' (DI), and his message is delivered to the Babylonian exiles.

Some examples will illustrate the method and message of the commentary. On 49:1–6, in 'Essentials and Perspectives', he depicts the Servant proclaiming his message to the whole world, no longer just to Israel, as in ch. 42. This is done with the help of cross-references, in meditative mode, to several New Testament passages on the topic of the power of the word of God. The Servant's message is that, though his mission to Israel has failed, it will yet come to fruition, along with, and by virtue of, his mission to the nations. Rom. 9–11 is a commentary on the present section (pp. 1–3).

In the 'Scholarly Exposition' on the same passage, he discusses at length, and in dialogue with Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions, the identity of the speaker (the Servant? Israel? the faithful part of Israel? the Messiah?), and decides for the last of these on the grounds that the call to 'hear' followed by 'elay' ('to me') in DI always indicates that God is drawing attention to himself (p. 7). He finds in addition that 'neither the prophet nor Israel could really have addressed the heathen world in the situation of the exile, which would make this act of speaking purely imaginative' (*ibid.*). Nor is there a decisive change at v. 5 (*contra* Watts, for example, who sees a new 'servant' commissioned there, *Isaiah 40–66*, *Word Commentary*, 187). Rather, this marks a new phase in the Servant's mission. In a discussion of 49:6, he takes *mhywtheka* ('that you should be'), not the following infinitives, as the subject of *naqel*, ('it is light, easy'), with a minority of interpreters and translations. The effect of this is to resist the idea that the servant's 'failure' in his mission to Israel is an 'acceptable loss'. The task previously given to the Servant, to bring back Israel to Yahweh, is therefore *not* dismissed here as too slight a task for him. Rather it is reaffirmed: 'your being Servant to me is easy, to restore the tribes of Jacob . . .'; and the mission to the whole world becomes a

continuation of this: 'and I give you as a light to the nations . . .' The review of interpretation, phrase by phrase, is compendious.

In this detailed exegesis, a theological thesis is never far from the surface. In Koole's interpretation, salvation in Christ is at the heart of the work begun in the restoration of the tribes, the preserved of Israel. Furthermore, the 'Servant' cannot readily be identified with DI, as he thinks this would be incompatible with the worldwide reach of his ministry (i.e. not just the prophet's Babylonian hearers) (p. 25).

A further example from the same chapter, 49:22-26, is instructive. In the 'Essentials and Perspectives', Koole sees vv. 22-23 as depicting a 'festive procession to Zion' by the nations, bringing exiles back in an act of homage parallel to the 'pilgrimage' in Isa. 2:2-4 (p. 69). Vv. 24-26, in contrast, portray an enemy, still holding the children of Zion captive, and to whom God declares that he will overcome them. New Testament echoes are found in Mark 3:27 (particularly), and in Rev. 16:6 (pp. 69-70).

The Scholarly Exposition begins with a discussion of the unity of the passage (which is defended, pp. 70-72). Vv. 22-24 are then interpreted as portraying the willing tribute of the nations. Here a problem is encountered because of the strong language of v. 23b, which seems to put the tributaries in the position of defeated enemies; but Koole sees this merely as a recognition of Yahweh's lordship, because of v. 23c (p. 76). He then contrasts this group with the 'oppressors' of v. 26 (p. 83). The uniting theme is the eventual recognition by all that Yahweh is God.

In this passage it is true that there is a different tone in vv. 24-26 from vv. 22-23. But the transition is perhaps not so sharp as Koole argues (against others who think vv. 22-23 depict the nations in servile role, cf. D. van Winkle, VT 35 [1985], 450ff.). It is possible that the theological thesis of the messianic message of salvation to all nations has influenced the exegesis too much at this point.

On the fourth Servant Song (Isa. 52:13-53:12), Koole offers a traditional Christian interpretation. The Servant now proclaims a new salvation: 'The suffering, dying Servant shares in the divine glory' (252). The New Testament fulfilment is always in view. For example, in 53:1, Israel admits its wrong; is Rom. 11:25-26 anticipated? At the same time the interpretation takes a broad view of the imagery here. The author shows a sympathy with all the human suffering that is evoked. In it, Israel is not excluded, but rather Auschwitz is

involved in what is portrayed (p. 251). And the Suffering Servant is rightly appropriated by the synagogue as well as the Church. However, the theological commitment is clear. On 53:12a, the 'many' (not the 'great') are those who are reconciled, after having turned away in 52:14: 'These have already accepted the Servant as Saviour (49:7). For them he was the only way to salvation' (p. 257).

There are two areas in which a reader might take issue with the commentary. One arises from the comprehensiveness itself. The lexicographical material in particular does not always feed directly into the interpretation offered. The author avoids the well known dangers of philology in interpretation, because he is sensitive to the contexts of words, but this means that sometimes one feels the discussions are redundant. The second area is the theological interpretation itself. As is clear from the above examples the commentary falls definitely into the Reformed tradition of interpretation, in its conviction that the prophetic text articulates in essence the message of the Gospel. Readers may sometimes quibble on the theological grounds over his reading of texts.

Nevertheless, this is a monumental work, the fruit of a lifetime's scholarship. It is both scholarship and theology, a celebration of the purpose of God to show his salvation to the whole world by means of the most painstaking labour on the Old Testament text. The intended comprehensiveness—from text-criticism and philology to theology—is sometimes challenging to the reader. Yet this work goes beyond most commentaries in its insistent concern to scrutinize the text of Scripture out of a theological conviction, and with a host of theological and hermeneutical questions in mind. In that sense it is a model. Not that it compels assent on every point, but that it manifests the devotion of a Christian scholar.

Gordon McConville
Cheltenham, England

EuroJTh (2000) 9:1, 91-93

0960-2720

Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away

Judith M. Gundry Volf

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990. IX + 325 pp.

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe, 37.
DM 69,- Hb.