

pret the names in 9:6 as descriptive of God rather than the king; and to read 52:13-53:12 as a coronation oracle based on a vision. Where necessary, Goldingay gently points out the shortcomings of the NIV on which the series is based, not only defending more accurate renderings but also pointing out in what ways some of the questionable decisions of the NIV translators may distort our perception of God (e.g., in his discussion on pp. 363-64 of whether to capitalise "Holy Spirit"). As a good commentator, he not only narrows down exegetical options but also, where appropriate, extends the options, allowing for different readings. There are of course details to disagree with but in my view none are of major consequence. It may be that Goldingay shows greater concern for modern sensitivities than theological tradition but he does not adjust the text to either; he tries to shield the text from uncharitable misreadings without blunting its edge. It still leaves work to be done for the theologian and preacher but as an entrée into the text, the commentary leaves little to be desired. It offers more detail than Webb and more theological reflection than Motyer and would be a good buy for all who want help in reading through Isaiah. The preacher needs to supplement this with a more extensive commentary like that by J. N. Oswalt – even an excellent commentary cannot adequately cover a major biblical book like Isaiah in 400 pages.

Thomas Renz, London, England

The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible.

Leo G. Perdue (ed.)

Oxford: Blackwell, 2002 £80 hb,

ISBN 0-631-21071-7

SUMMARY

A book which aims to fill a gap but does not succeed. Its strength is in the discussion of the historicity of the biblical accounts of Ancient Israel and some insight into differing methodologies and ideologies of approaches to the Hebrew Bible. It is neither comprehensive nor detailed enough.

RESUMÉ

Ce livre vise à combler un manque mais passe à côté de son objectif. Son point fort réside dans le traitement de la question de l'historicité des récits bibliques de l'Israël ancien, ainsi que dans un apport éclairant concernant différentes méthodologies et idéologies qui orientent les approches de l'Ancien Testament. Mais il n'est ni suffisamment complet, ni suffisamment détaillé.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Buch versucht, eine Lücke zu füllen, schafft dies aber nicht ganz. Die Stärken liegen in der Diskussion der Historizität der biblischen Berichte über das alte Israel, sowie in einigen Einsichten zu Methodologien

und Ideologien beim Herangehen an die hebräische Bibel. Das Buch ist weder umfassend noch detailliert genug.

* * * *

This is a fairly disappointing (and expensive) book. It is neither detailed nor comprehensive enough. 'Flash-points of controversy' would have been a more fitting title. Much attention is given to archaeology and the question of *what was Israel?*, but only the last quarter actually focuses on the books of the Hebrew bible and then the coverage is too short to be useful—John J Collins on Apocalyptic is an exception, but most are nothing more than sketches and musings. The same has to be said about the section on Old Testament theology, so really the book's strength is to be found in its first four sections: 'The Hebrew Bible in Modern Study', 'Israelite and Early Jewish History', 'Archaeology of Israel and Early Judaism' (both contributions by William Dever) and 'The Religious and Social World of Ancient Israel and Early Judaism' (sometimes the criteria for these divisions seem arbitrary—why is the essay on the archaeology of Solomon's temple not in the Archaeology section? Possibly because, as we shall see, it acts as a kind of more conservative response to the trends represented by Carroll and Hoppe, and to an extent, Meyer.)

On the question of the historicity of the settlement period up to the establishment of the monarchy: negatively, the history of Israel's conquest and settlement is neither moral nor significant enough to be reported by other nations. The ruins of Ai and Jericho are earlier than the sackings by the Israelites in Joshua. Nor is Alt's nomadic theory (nomads settling into agriculture at a later stage of development) borne out by archaeology and anthropology. Yet, on the positive side, there is some amount of historical attestation such as to the names of characters and towns in Joshua-Judges. 'Tribes' can be understood as 'chiefdoms'. The general disruption in the region in c13BCE is alluded to at Judg 5:8; the highlands were vacant before Israel filled them. The Egyptian mentioning of Israel as a political unit (Merneptah stele, c 1210 BCE). Also, Egyptians tended to keep quiet about their losses. The question about evidence is—is the bottle half full or half empty? On which side lies 'the burden of proof'?

It is interesting to compare styles of integrating biblical 'truth' with archaeological 'truth'. Hoppe in his essay sticks close to the bible, paraphrasing and summarizing it without leaning on archaeology, but accepting that what the bible describes after the period of the United Monarchy is credible. For Carroll, the Hebrew bible is dominated by theme of displacement and exile and attendant ideologies. So, quite apart from any interest in telling us how it was 'the story of the Bible then reads as propaganda for their claims and position as a kind of citizens-temple community.' (109) For Carroll, this story, when deconstructed shows up just how permanent an experience the diaspora was for the majority

of Israel, and the exile and the return to Zion was more a myth or metaphor than an event. There is a vicious side-swipe in the concluding paragraph which reminds us that modern day religious politics are part of the hermeneutic in these debates 'Even those who live in their own homeland may entertain themselves by using the *discourse of exile* to describe their well-appointed places in society (see contemporary American biblical theologians).' (114)

But the hub of the book is to be found in William Dever's two essays: Admittedly, Biblical archaeology had been wilfully ignorant of questions of historiography, yet its latter-day critics (from Davies to Lemche) were too dismissive of it, Archaeology can provide us with evidence of material culture and more. 'Archaeology can answer such questions as Who, What, Where, When and How? But it cannot answer the questions: Why?' (123). Dever's affirmation of archaeology in attesting to the 'centralisation' of Israel around the time of Solomon is bullish and positive: 'Archaeology shows that the prophets were realistic: they knew what they were up against' (with reference to the widespread evidence of fertility cult.) But it is no longer 'biblical archaeology' and perhaps for this reason the discipline is dying as Dever observes. There are some fascinating observations about the relationship between archaeology, the land and Jewish nationalism. True, archaeology of material culture needs a hermeneutic, but biblical scholars need to stop ignoring the handbooks of Weipert, Mazar, Ben-Tor and Levy. (139)

All in all a very interesting window into a debate that has raged through the 1990s, but hardly what is says on the cover.

Song of Songs
(*The New International Commentary on the*
Old Testament)

Tremper Longman III

Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001, xvi + 238
pp., hb, ISBN 0-8028-2543-5

SUMMARY

Tremper Longman III has written a valuable, evangelical commentary. His comments on each individual verse are helpful. His approach is to read Song of Songs in a literal/natural way, as an anthology of love poems without a clear order. At the same time, the author argues that the book helps us understand our relationship with God, which resembles a marriage relationship. The reviewer is not fully convinced that this last aspect is correct.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Tremper Longman III hat ein wertvolles, evangelikales Kommentar geschrieben. Seine Bemerkungen zu jedem Vers sind hilfreich. Er interpretiert das Hohelied als eine

Anthologie von Liebespoesie ohne chronologische Ordnung. Er lehnt die allegorische Interpretation ab. Er meint auch dass das Buch beiträgt zum Verständnis unseres Verhältnisses zu Gott, das einer Ehe gleicht. Die Rezensentin ist nicht von dieser Auslegung überzeugt.

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur nous livre un commentaire de valeur, rédigé dans une perspective évangélique. Il commente le texte verset par verset de manière utile. Il adopte une interprétation littérale naturelle et voit le livre comme une anthologie de poèmes d'amour, sans ordre apparent. En même temps, il soutient que ce livre nous aide à comprendre notre relation avec Dieu, qui est comparable à la relation conjugale. L'auteur de cette recension n'est pas pleinement convaincu que ce dernier point soit juste.

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Writing a commentary on the Song of Songs is not an easy job. The character of the book has been much disputed over the centuries. In the Introduction to his commentary, Tremper Longman III deals extensively with the different kinds of interpretation from early days until today, discussing not only allegorical and literal readings, but also psychological and political interpretations. His conclusion is that Song of Songs must be read in a literal/natural way: the book is not a code which in fact means something else, but is to be taken as an anthology of love poems. The poetry of the Song is dealt with extensively (pp. 9-17), showing that a 'natural' reading of the book does not mean that it is 'flat'. Many metaphors and much imagery has been used, not all of which is immediately clear to the modern day reader (why, e.g., are the eyes of the bride like 'doves', see 1:15?). In his introduction, the author also compares Song of Songs with ancient Near Eastern literature and he finds the Egyptian love poetry provides the closest comparison.

Longman does not interpret Song of Songs as a real story, developing a plot, as several other commentators do. He finds no real order in the poems, although they certainly form a unity in terms of themes, language, etc. Yet sometimes the text assumes that the man and woman are married whereas later on they seem not yet married. We should not read a chronological order into the text, the author states, but read it as a series of (in fact, twenty-three) poems which describe different facets of marital love. The book is not about one specific historical husband and wife (and it is not about Solomon!), Longman argues. It describes love, including sexual love, between two poetic persons. The author applies this principle in his verse-by-verse explanation, although regarding the sexual implications of some of his exegeses (e.g. 5:14) one may differ in opinion.

Though Longman rejects the allegorical reading of Songs of Songs, he does see a theological level in the book. In the first place, it tells us how wonderful sexual-

ity as a gift of God is. The book shows a really positive insight in sexuality and in comparison with the human story after the Fall it reflects 'the healing of intimacy' (p. 66), even though the relationship between man and wife is not perfect until the Last Day. Besides, the book helps us in understanding our relationship with God, which is as intimate, emotionally intense and exclusive as a marriage relationship, the author states.

Here I'd like to ask some questions. The Bible indeed compares the relationship between God (or Christ) and his people (Church) with marriage, as Longman points out, but not our personal relationship with God. In the second place, the metaphor of marriage should be handled carefully. God is not actually 'married' to his people, and neither are we to Christ. Exclusiveness seems to be a valid point of comparison between human wedlock and the relationship between God and his people, but is intimacy? The author says: 'The more we understand about marriage, the more we understand about our relationship with God.' This is deriving insights about God from human experience, but should we not start at the other end? Is the human love of a father a 'model' of God's love or is God using the image of fatherly love to show us something (not everything) of how he is? Thirdly, I think understanding Song of Songs just as an anthology of love poems, in which love (and sexuality) between one man and one woman is regarded as a gift from God, is sufficient interpretation of the book. Read thus, the book makes clear that sexuality is God-given, but not deified. Elsewhere in the Bible it is made very clear that sexuality is not meant to play a role in the worship of the God of Israel, as was often the case amongst other nations. Thus it seems a sound idea not to mix our relationship with God with the purpose of Song of Songs. Without doing this, the book itself is well worth reading because it testifies the beauty of God's creation.

Tremper Longman III has written a valuable, evangelical commentary. His comments on each individual verse are helpful also for those who are not too familiar with the Hebrew language. The book will certainly be of use for all those who study this interesting part of the Old Testament.

Hetty Lalleman, London, England

Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job
(*New Studies in Biblical Theology 12*)

Robert S. Fyall

Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2002, 208pp.,
£10.99, pb, ISBN 0-85111-498-9

SUMMARY

This book gives a holistic reading of Job particularly in terms of its depiction of creation and evil. Fyall insight-

fully highlights the theological significance of the evil within God's creation and providence. He has a good evaluation upon the author's use of imagery and myth in Job. He rightly states that the dichotomy of the naturalistic and supernatural interpretation of Behemoth and Leviathan should be avoided. However, in his argument, he claims that Behemoth is the god of death (Mot) and Leviathan a guise of Satan. It seems that he leaves no room to the ambiguity of the images. He does not convincingly deal with the issue of what Job has spoken rightly of God and what his friends have not.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses Buch liest Hiob unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Darstellung der Schöpfung und des Bösen. Mit guten Einsichten stellt Fyall die theologische Bedeutung des Bösen innerhalb der Schöpfung und Vorsehung Gottes heraus. Er bringt eine gute Wertung der Verwendung von Bildersprache und Mythos bei Hiob. Zu Recht wird gesagt, dass die Dichotomie einer naturalistischen und übernatürlichen Interpretation von Behemoth und Leviathan vermieden werden sollte. Allerdings wird argumentiert, dass Behemoth der Gott des Todes sei (mot), und Leviathan eine Verkörperung Satans. Der Mehrdeutigkeit der Bilder scheint dabei nicht genug Raum gegeben. Außerdem wird nicht überzeugend mit der Frage gerungen, was an Hiobs Rede über Gott richtig, und was an der seiner Freunde falsch ist.

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur fait une lecture globale du livre de Job en s'intéressant particulièrement aux thèmes de la création et du mal. Avec pénétration, il met en lumière l'importance théologique du problème du mal dans le cadre de la création et de la providence divine. Il fait preuve d'une bonne compréhension de la manière dont l'auteur du livre de Job utilise les images et le langage des mythes. Avec raison, il affirme qu'il faut éviter d'opposer l'interprétation qui fait du behemoth et du leviathan de simples animaux à celle qui en fait des êtres surnaturels. Néanmoins, dans sa présentation, il considère que behemoth est le dieu de la mort (Mot) et leviathan une manifestation de Satan. Il semble ainsi ne plus laisser aucune ambiguïté aux images. En outre, il n'analyse pas de manière convaincante de quelle façon Job a correctement parlé de Dieu, alors que ses amis ont mal parlé de Dieu.

* * * *

This book aims at giving a holistic reading of the Book of Job particularly in terms of its description of creation and evil. In order to unlock the meaning of Job, special attention is paid to exploring the imagery and mythical allusions of the Ancient Near East. The main argument of this study is that Behemoth is the god of death (Mot) and Leviathan a guise of Satan. According to Fyall, the divine council, theologically speaking, is the controlling theme of the book. Moreover, the role of Satan con-