

in verse 3 switching to “its” in verse 4 and for the vision being the topic in verse 3 and God being the referent for some of the pronouns in verse 4 (with the “swollen is his throat ... in him” of the translation becoming “... against him (God)” in the comment). I agree that “the dependability of God is inseparable from the certainty of his word” (215) but found the discussion of the precise reference of the pronouns less than clear.

The message in the vision is identified as the series of five woe oracles (225, cf. 214) which are all specifically targeted at the Chaldean nation, although “they need not have been freshly composed for this application” (233). Andersen finds a key phrase in the middle of each oracle. For the difficult verses 9-10, Andersen suggests to read the second half of verse 10, after the pivotal sentence, as continuing the last and the first half sentence of verse 9 – in that order. The translation “and thy soul is sinful” in 2:10 is glossed later as “sinning (against) thine own life” but otherwise left unexplained; no reference is made to Prov. 20:2 which suggests that the reference is to forfeiting one’s life. Andersen proposes that the blood in 2:12 “could be that of a foundation sacrifice” (243) but this suggestion does little to illuminate the text. More helpful is his observation that “a teacher of lies” in 2:18 is likely a reference to false prophecy as with “lies” in Isa. 9:14 and often in Jeremiah. Chapter 3 is an archaic poem with verses 3-15 referring to events in the past, appropriated by Habakkuk. Andersen is content to study the mt, showing no great confidence in our ability to recover a more original version, and attempts to discern poetic units larger than bicola and tricola.

In sum, most of the linguistic and historical information you might hope to find in a commentary is there but the organisation is poor and the writing diffuse, making it hard to find the discussion of any specific point. This is particularly true of textual criticism, where a concise display of the evidence similar to that in the Word Bible Commentary series would have been more helpful. In spite of a few surprising omissions, the commentary has a lot to offer to scholars and students of Habakkuk on the linguistic and literary side.

Thomas Renz  
London, England

*Deuteronomy and the Meaning of ‘Monotheism’  
(Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 1)*

Nathan MacDonald

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003, ix + 271 pp.,

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**SUMMARY**

In this update to his PhD thesis, MacDonald addresses the ‘meaning and significance of YHWH’s oneness in Deuteronomy’, seeking to show that ‘most... scholars

share an understanding of ‘monotheism’ that is only conceivable as a result of the Enlightenment’ (pp. 1, 2). He reviews the historical development of the term ‘monotheism’ and tests it against the exegesis of Deuteronomy’s monotheistic texts. He has convincingly shown that Deuteronomy’s concept of ‘monotheism’ is better understood as a ‘oneness’ or ‘uniqueness’ that is inseparably tied to the theology of confession, love, remembrance, election and idolatry. He has been less successful in his claim that Deuteronomy (and the OT) allow for the existence of other gods.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

In dieser Studie, der eine Dissertation zugrunde liegt, widmet sich MacDonald „der Bedeutung und Signifikanz der Einzigkeit Gottes im Deuteronomium“. Er versucht zu zeigen, dass „die meisten Gelehrten ein Verständnis von Monotheismus teilen, das nur als Resultat der Aufklärung vorstellbar ist.“ (S. 1, 2). Er lässt die geschichtliche Entwicklung des Begriffs Monotheismus Revue passieren und vergleicht dazu die Exegese monotheistischer Texte des Deuteronomium. Er zeigt überzeugend, dass das deuteronomistische Konzept von Monotheismus besser als eine „Einzigkeit“ oder „Einzigartigkeit“ zu verstehen ist, die untrennbar mit der Theologie des Bekenntnisses, der Liebe, der Erinnerung, der Erwählung und des Götzen dienstes verbunden ist. Weniger überzeugend ist seine Behauptung, das Deuteronomium (und das Alte Testament) bezeugt die Existenz anderer Götter.

**RÉSUMÉ**

L’auteur met ici à jour sa thèse de doctorat sur la question de la signification de l’unicité de Yahvé dans le Deutéronome. Il cherche à montrer que la plupart des spécialistes partent d’une conception du monothéisme qui ne pouvait naître que comme la conséquence de la pensée du siècle des Lumières. Il retrace le développement historique du mot ‘monothéisme’ et examine les résultats ainsi obtenus à la lumière de l’exégèse des textes monothéistes du Deutéronome. Il montre de façon convaincante que le concept deutéronomique de monothéisme doit se comprendre comme celui d’une unicité qui est lié de manière indissociable à la théologie de la confession, de l’amour, du souvenir, de l’élection et de l’idolâtrie. Il est bien moins convaincant lorsqu’il prétend que le Deutéronome (et le reste de l’Ancien Testament) n’exclut pas l’existence d’autres divinités.

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This is an revised version of MacDonald’s doctoral thesis at the University of Durham. In it, he tackles the ‘meaning and significance of YHWH’s oneness in Deuteronomy, the contemporary category of “monotheism” and the relation between the two’ seeking to show that ‘most... scholars share an understanding of “monotheism” that is only conceivable as a result of the Enlightenment’ (pp. 1-2). The first chapter summarizes the origin and development of ‘monotheism’ in philosophy, Old Testament theology and Deuteronomy scholarship



in particular. According to MacDonald, the metaphysical excesses of Enlightenment rationalism motivated the creation of a 'universal' connotation of 'monotheism', which excluded the possibility of other gods and favoured the cognitive and propositional aspects of YHWH's divinity.

In the rest of the thesis MacDonald tests the historical conceptions of monotheism against a close exegesis of Deuteronomy's key monotheistic texts. He identifies the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4ff as the centre of Deuteronomy's theology – and Deuteronomy's 'monotheism' – in order to offer a less 'enlightened' definition of monotheism, which appears to consist of two claims. First, he concludes that Deuteronomy allowed for the existence of other gods that could be worshipped by the nations, while restricting Israel's worship to YHWH in his 'oneness' and 'uniqueness'. Second, with detailed and often persuasive exegesis, MacDonald argues for a the theology of 'monotheism' in Deuteronomy in the context of confession, love, remembrance, election and idolatry, especially as seen in the theological frame (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7-9 and 32).

By adopting a 'canonical' or 'synchronic' reading of Deuteronomy MacDonald is able to attest to the beauty and range of Deuteronomy's literary and theological expression that has often been neglected in the history of Deuteronomy research. One cannot help but be drawn into MacDonald's re-telling of the Deuteronomy story as grounded in mutual love between YHWH and his chosen people Israel. In lucid detail, he describes the underlying web of themes and dialectics that unite the book in its final form: blessing-curse, obedience-disobedience, remembering-forgetting, clean-unclean, immanence-transcendence etc.

As for the two specific claims in MacDonald's resistance towards the Enlightenment notion of monotheism two areas deserve further attention. First, while he has astutely capitalized on new and exciting opportunities to rethink the relationship between ideologies and interpretation, his strong resistance to the Enlightenment seems to lead to a false dilemma. That is, MacDonald seems too ready to assume that the philosophical terms coined by Enlightenment thinkers *by necessary inference* fail to capture ancient theological truths. A degree of philosophical and biblical theological sophistication may be somewhat lacking in this way. So, while I appreciate his suspicions of 'objectivity' as attributed to Enlightenment rationalism, I cannot follow his theological exegesis which inconsistently relates Deuteronomy to its biblical theological context. For example, one senses a disproportionate zeal to deny Deuteronomy even a hint of exclusionary monotheism. In denying the mis-ological significance in Deuteronomy's theology (p. 175), which might otherwise be connected to the universal promise (Genesis 12:1-3) and the knowledge of the nations (Isaiah 40-55; Ezekiel 39, etc.), MacDonald lacks interaction with scholars like Christopher Wright and Daniel Block.

Second, it is with great skill that MacDonald ties the first commandment to the *Shema* (the great commandment), idolatry and monotheism as they unite the theme of YHWH's oneness throughout the entirety of Deuteronomy. The significance of 'monotheism' (oneness) as it relates to knowledge and obedience is not appreciated by most Deuteronomy scholars and it is tremendous to see it worked out so convincingly here. In this context, however, MacDonald makes what I take as an especially ironic move in arguing for a literal interpretation of the *Shema* 'writing' commands (6:6-9) and a metaphorical reading of the *herem* command (chapters 7 and 21). By juxtaposing these concepts in his interpretation, MacDonald shows either an inability or an unwillingness to consistently avoid what can fairly be described as 'Enlightenment innovations' in his interpretation.

In the end, I think MacDonald has undoubtedly succeeded in showing that a mere cognitive or propositional notion of monotheism is inadequate to describe the far more relational and situational aspects of knowledge and monotheism as they are expressed not only in Deuteronomy, but in OT theology as a whole. I would suggest that he has been less successful in defending his claim that Deuteronomy's monotheism (and that of the OT in general) does not inter-textually and progressively deny the possibility of other gods. In any case, MacDonald has helpfully broadened an emerging field of study that combines close exegesis with theology and the history of interpretation as they have been influenced by deeper philosophical interests.

Ryan O'Dowd  
Cheltenham, England

*Karl Barth, The Theology of the Reformed Confessions*

Translated and Annotated by D. L. Guder & J. J. Guder

Columbia Series in Reformed Theology

Louisville/London: WJKP, 2002, xix + 330 pp., £20, hb, ISBN 0-664-22261-7

**SUMMARY**

Barth's *Theology of the Reformed Confessions* is a well-researched and erudite discussion of the function of confessions in the Reformed Church and its attitude towards confessions. Following discussion of the significance of confessions and the relationship between confession and Scripture, the bulk of the book analyses the theological content of both major and minor Reformed confessions. This is an important book which gives an insight into the early theological development of one of the most important theologians of the 20th century.