

contained in many articles, and will be enabled to keep abreast of more recent trends in pentateuchal scholarship which has seen a revolution in many of its aspects in recent decades.

Reflecting to some extent the diverse intended audience, it was refreshing to find an article on 'Preaching from the Pentateuch' (pp 637-643) in which McMickle offers some statistics that underline the relative rarity of preaching from anywhere in the OT, let alone from the Pentateuch. He then develops his work under three headings: 'The Necessity of Preaching from the OT' in which he reminds us rightly that 'it is impossible to understand the ministry of Jesus and Paul or the theology of the NT without having ... understanding of the ... Pentateuch'; 'Preaching from the Pentateuch'; and 'Principles for Christian Preaching from the OT', under which heading he covers, as well as allegory and typology, issues of continuity and discontinuity, liberation theology, promise and fulfilment, and salvation history. In the section on 'Preaching from the Pentateuch,' McMickle, highlights 'creationism versus evolution' as a significant preaching theme, thus revealing the article's North American provenance. It would have been helpful to see more emphasis placed on the theology of creation in relation to that of temple, an area in which a fair amount of research and writing has been undertaken in recent years. Other issues highlighted as being worthy of the preacher's attention are: the role and status of women in the community of faith, especially with regard to leadership; the institution of marriage; and environmental issues. On the whole I found this section disappointing, but perhaps that betrays my own preference for a more biblical theological approach.

In his article on 'Hermeneutics' Goldingay considers 10 different approaches to the interpretation of the Pentateuch (Christological, Doctrinal, Devotional, Ethical, Feminist, Imperialist, Liberation, Midrashic, Modern, and Postmodern) before finally anticipating 'an increased flowering of newer approaches' in the coming decades. With respect to the 'Doctrinal Interpretation' we may agree with much of what Goldingay writes as well as with his conclusion that 'the framework of Christian doctrine may be allowed to open up questions, but it must not be allowed to determine answers,' even if we are not so ready as he to excoriate 'the rule for the faith' that came to be embodied in the Apostles' Creed for being 'devastatingly effective in silencing the OT and marginalizing the place of Israel in the church's thinking.' One wonders if the silencing of the OT, particularly in Western pulpits, may be blamed more on the influence of some of the elements of 'Modern Interpretation.' In the light of the recent Iraq War, Goldingay's analysis of the 'Imperialist Interpretation' makes sober reading and we all – whether British, American, Israeli or whatever – would do well to heed his warning that 'interpretation of the Pentateuch in the light of the conviction that our particular nation is an embodiment of Israel needs to be accompanied with interpretation in the light of the

possibility that our nation is an embodiment of Egypt.' Goldingay is almost as critical of some more recent interpretative approaches (e.g., liberation, and feminist) which illustrate 'the way in which an interpretive stance or commitment both opens interpreters' eyes to aspects of the text that have been ignored and also risks assimilating the text to the commitment that the interpreters have already made.'

Occasionally, contributors 'take critical assumptions to task, seeking at least to identify the albatross if not to remove it'. One such instance is with the article on the 'Religion of the Patriarchs' (671) where the author has chosen 'to offer an alternative' to the standard critical approach 'without proof' with the result that students will have to look elsewhere for help with responding to the critical approach. On the other hand, the sermon preparation of preachers is likely to benefit from the article.

As is usual with works of this genre, the contributions vary in approach and quality and are therefore of variable usefulness to one or other of the anticipated audiences. However, at the price, this is a treasure trove of great value and one that scholars, pastors and (where finances allow) students should have within easy reach.

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***Encountering God's Word:  
Beginning biblical studies***

**Edited by Philip Duce & Daniel Strange**

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**SUMMARY**

This valuable book is aimed at students beginning biblical studies at university level and comprises four essays written by different authors delivering courses of university standard. Essays (1) and (2) discuss beginning study in the Old and New Testaments respectively. Number (3) deals with biblical hermeneutics in a post-modern world, and (4) examines the roles of faith and evidence in believing the Bible. The authors take a sympathetic approach to both the methods of modern scholarship and also to the question of evangelical integrity. Hard questions have to be wrestled with but, the contributors maintain, it is possible to do this while being fully committed to the veracity of scripture and also from the perspective of experimental faith. Highly commended.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Dieses wertvolle Buch richtet sich an Studenten, die das Studium der Bibel auf Universitätsniveau beginnen. Es umfasst vier Essays von verschiedenen Autoren, die universitäre Kurse unterrichten. Essays (1) und (2) diskutieren die Fragen zu Beginn des Studiums des Alten und des Neuen Testaments. Nummer (3) behandelt biblische Hermeneutik in der Postmoderne, und Essay (4) untersucht die Rolle



von Glaube und Evidenz in der Akzeptanz der Bibel. Die Autoren vertreten einen sympathischen Ansatz sowohl im Hinblick auf die Methoden moderner Wissenschaft als auch im Hinblick auf evangelikale Integrität. Schwierige Fragen erfordern Auseinandersetzung, aber, so die Autoren, man kann dies tun und gleichzeitig der Wahrhaftigkeit der Schrift sowie einer Perspektive experimentellem Glaubens verpflichtet bleiben. Sehr zu empfehlen.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage est destiné aux étudiants qui débutent un cursus biblique au niveau universitaire. Il comprend quatre essais écrits par différents auteurs qui enseignent au niveau universitaire. Les deux premiers traitent respectivement de la manière d'aborder l'étude de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament. Le troisième traite de l'herméneutique dans un monde post-moderne et le quatrième considère la part de la foi et des preuves objectives dans la croyance en la Bible. Les auteurs adoptent une approche qui prend en compte les méthodes de la science moderne tout en se préoccupant d'intégrité évangélique. Les questions difficiles ne doivent pas être éludées, mais les auteurs maintiennent qu'il est possible d'aborder ces questions tout en adhérant pleinement à la véracité de l'Écriture ainsi qu'en se plaçant du point de vue de l'expérience de la foi. Ce livre est chaudement recommandé.

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This valuable book is aimed at students beginning, or perhaps in their second year of, biblical studies at university level and comprises four lengthy essays, each by a different author. The first two focus on beginning study in the Old and New Testaments respectively. Essay three deals with the thorny issue of biblical interpretation while the final essay discusses the roles of faith and evidence in believing the bible. The authors are all fairly young graduates/university teachers who bring a fresh, up-to-date feel to the book.

In the first essay, Peter Williams of Aberdeen University, encourages the student to get to grips with two preliminaries in approaching the study of the Old Testament. Firstly, the text itself ought to be read and re-read to gain familiarity with the primary source material. Secondly, learn Hebrew! These are two laudable aims and justifiably emphasised. Williams then raises some of the main issues which an evangelical student holding to a high view of scripture will have to deal with in any Old Testament course. Is all of it true? Did Isaiah write any or all of the book which bears his name? Who is Wellhausen and was he right? What about the book of Joshua—is genocide defensible? Is the Old Testament coherent? Should the New Testament be consulted? His main point is that students should accept that they will be challenged to engage critically with these legitimate questions, some of which do not yield to definite solutions.

The second essay, by Alistair Wilson of Highland Theological College, also places much emphasis on read-

ing the primary text and on the learning of Greek. However, equally as important as these two, says Wilson, is that the student read as widely as possible in background matters. Familiarity with first century Judaism, intertestamental literature, rabbinic sources, the Dead Sea scrolls and early Christian writings help to create a feel for the life context in which the New Testament was written. Wilson also discusses in some detail the function and role of criticism and provides a useful survey of the main branches of critical study. This is all very helpful and is essential reference material for the beginning student to review from time to time to gain familiarity with the 'buzz' words of New Testament study.

Thirdly, Antony Billington of London Bible College takes the reader into the troubled waters of hermeneutics and does so with a steady hand. Billington engages with the recognised triad of author, text and reader (with special reference to the work of Kevin Vanhoozer.) He is also convinced of the value of Biblical Theology as an interpretative key to scripture and devotes considerable space to a discussion of its significant role. This chapter is thoroughly up to date and provides the reader with a comprehensive overview of much recent discussion. As a summary of the issues involved in fulfilment its purpose admirably. My only question is whether or not this is suitable material for those beginning biblical studies. Perhaps this chapter is more suited to later second year or third year study so that the nuances of hermeneutics might be appreciated.

The final essay is by David Gibson, a postgraduate student at King's College, London (now at the University of Aberdeen). Gibson discusses the roles of faith and evidence in believing the Bible and rightly argues for the primacy of the gospel and the work of the Spirit. It is through the preaching of the gospel and the illumination of the Spirit that we come to faith in the first place. And this experience of coming to faith, says Gibson, leads us to accept the truthfulness of the Bible. But Gibson asks; is there something more that can be said to convince a skeptic (i.e. probably one's fellow students) that the Bible is the word of God? Is there something *external* to scripture which is incontrovertibly true and which will command universal assent? Gibson answers in the negative. Rather, the position for the evangelical student is that he operates within a matrix of contributing factors. This matrix comprises the message of the gospel, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, issues of external corroboration such as the use of archaeology and historical documents and, finally, appropriate moral responses.

This is a sympathetic and valuable book designed to discuss the wider implications of Biblical studies courses at university level. It is intended to complement the material encountered on such courses, and does so admirably. It is also a valuable book for church leaders who have to encourage the leaders of tomorrow. The bibliographical references are superb and give many helpful suggestions as to further reading as well as suitable internet sites.

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