

provides some of the underlying research that led to his *Kings without Privilege*, and then some which develop his argument and respond to critics. The third section then explores ways in which the argument developed in the second can be extended into the wider realm of Old Testament studies.

As was also the case with Joshua Retold, Auld swims against the stream in much of this. As well as rejecting the common view that Chronicles depends upon Samuel-Kings, he also raises important questions about the value of continuing to regard the Former Prophets as 'deuteronomistic', largely because he wants to reverse the historical order between these books and Deuteronomy. Related to this is his move to date much of this material considerably later than is currently fashionable even within critical scholarship. Auld is aware of this, but suggests that his view 'through the looking glass' in which we see things from other angles may turn out to be more persuasive. I rather suspect that the stream will continue to flow against Auld on many of these matters, but there remains great value in having cogent arguments presented for alternative views because in this way the fragility of many of the assumed results of scholarship are made manifest to us.

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Review of Recent Psalms Commentaries

The Psalms

A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation

John Eaton

London: T&T Clark, 2003

536 pp., £15.99, pb, ISBN: 0826488951

Psalms 2

A Commentary on Psalms 51-100

Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger
(trans. Linda M. Maloney)

Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005

552 pp., £36.99, hb, ISBN: 9780800660611

The Psalms

Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary

Samuel Terrien

Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003

971 pp., hb, ISBN: 0802826059

Psalms Volume 1

Gerald H. Wilson

NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002

1024 pp., £23.99, hb, ISBN: 9780310206354

SUMMARY

While they are all quite different in approach, tone and target audience, each of these four commentaries, in its own way, makes a welcome contribution to our understanding of the Psalter. As is to be expected, Hossfeld and Zenger's *Hermeneia* commentary is probably the most overtly 'academic' in tone and approach. The other commentaries are equally rigorous in their research and grasp of current psalms scholarship but they seek to address other questions or more general audiences. Terrien's primary concern is analysis of the strophic structure of each of the psalms. Eaton's approach is focussed on historical reading of the text and a more meditative response to the psalms. Wilson, following the pattern of the NIVAC series, seeks to discuss not only what the text *meant* in its historical setting, but also what the text *means* for Christians today. Each of these commentaries makes a fine contribution to psalms studies.

RÉSUMÉ

Chacun de ces quatre commentaires a une approche et une tonalité différentes, et s'adresse à des publics différents, mais chacun apporte une contribution utile à notre compréhension des Psaumes. Comme on pouvait s'y attendre, le commentaire que nous livrent Hossfeld et Zenger dans la série *Hermeneia* est probablement le plus ouvertement académique. Les autres commentaires sont tout aussi rigoureux dans leur recherche et leur assimilation de travaux académiques contemporains sur les Psaumes, mais ils cherchent à traiter d'autres questions ou à répondre aux besoins d'un public plus large. Le but principal de Terrien est l'analyse de la structure strophique de chaque psaume. Eaton s'attache à une lecture du texte dans son contexte historique pour se livrer à une méditation des Psaumes. Wilson suit le modèle de la série NIVAC et cherche à montrer non seulement ce que le texte signifiait dans son contexte historique, mais aussi ce qu'il signifie pour les Chrétiens d'aujourd'hui. Chacun de ces commentaires apporte une bonne contribution à l'étude des Psaumes.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Obwohl sie im Hinblick auf Ansatz, Tonlage und Zielpublikum recht unterschiedlich sind, stellt doch jeder dieser vier Kommentare auf seine Weise einen willkommenen Beitrag zum Verständnis der Psalmen dar. Wie zu erwarten ist der *Hermeneia*-Kommentar von Hossfeld und Zenger am deutlichsten „akademisch“ in Tonlage und Ansatz. Die anderen Kommentare sind ebenso streng in Bezug auf ihre eigene Forschung und ihre Kenntnis der gegenwärtigen Psalmenforschung, aber sie wollen andere Fragen behandeln oder ein allgemeines Publikum ansprechen. Terriens Hauptanliegen ist die Analyse der strophischen Struktur jedes Psalms. Eatons Ansatz konzentriert sich auf eine historische Leseweise des Textes und eine stärker meditative Antwort auf die Psalmen. Nach dem Muster der NIVAC-Reihe versucht Wilson nicht nur zu diskutieren, was der Text in seiner historischen Situation *bedeutete*, sondern auch, was der Text für Christen heute *bedeutet*. Jeder

dieser Kommentare stellt einen ausgezeichneten Beitrag zum Studium der Psalmen dar.

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John Eaton's commentary is the product of a lifetime spent studying the psalms. That in itself should commend the book to the reader. Each section includes a translation of the psalm followed by a brief discussion of the psalm as a whole and (also fairly brief) exegetical discussion of the text as it breaks down into strophes or stanzas before final comments and a concluding prayer. The pitch of Eaton's commentary is accessibly academic, therefore the translations tend to be more functionally equivalent (smooth, polished, poetic English) than formally correspondent (close to the rhythm and brevity of the Hebrew text). The translations read well and, even although the comment on each psalm tends to be brief, Eaton gets to the heart of the theology of each poem.

Readers of Eaton's commentary should be careful to make their way to the appendix at the back of the book as they study each psalm. It is there that we find some very helpful discussion of translation questions and the historical interpretation of the text. The appendix complements well the more contemplative discussion in the main text of the commentary. This is a truly sympathetic commentary with a great grasp of the tone and spiritual purpose of each poems. Eaton does a tremendous job of grounding that rhetorical (for want of a better word) impact of the psalms in the realities of contemporary Christian spirituality.

Unusually perhaps, Hossfeld and Zenger begin their three-volume commentary on the psalms with psalms 50-100. In part this is because they have already written on Pss 1-50 in the German *Neue Echter Bibel* series but it is also the result of Hossfeld and Zenger's commitment to understanding the psalms as an ordered canonical document. Their plan is to publish first on Pss 50-100, then on Pss 101-150 and only then will they revisit the first fifty psalms. Obviously, the first volume will contain introductory discussion, including consideration of the canonical shape and historical development of the Book of Psalms, and it is their desire only to return to this question after their study of the shape of the Psalter as a whole is complete. The commentary follows the familiar pattern of the *Hermeneia* series. Each section begins with a translation of the psalm under consideration, followed by notes on the text and translation and questions for analysis (anything from structure to genre to redaction-critical questions to the dating of the text). This discussion is then followed by 'exposition' of the text (really exegetical analysis), study of its context in relation to neighbouring psalms and the possible significance of the psalm in the New Testament.

The tone throughout is scholarly and all the discussion is well-grounded in the secondary literature (both English-language and German). The translations that Hossfeld and Zenger offer are of particular value as they take a translation approach that 'is not primarily concerned

with good English (whatever that is), but [is] transparent to the structure of the Hebrew language' (xi). This means that on occasion the authors will leave two possible translations in place where they believe that there is no clear evidence to support one over the other (e.g. is Ps 61:7 [EVV 61:6] to be read as an imperfect [promise] or a jussive [prayer]?). Occasionally, they will leave a bracketed translation with a question mark where they are unsure of whether a word needs to be added to the translation or not (e.g. the added 'me' in Ps 61:6 [EVV 61:5]). Their translations are rich and grasp more of the terseness and rhythm of Hebrew parallelism text than contemporary English translations tend to. Quite simply, this is a thoroughly good commentary that is competent in every way. Anyone interested in close readings of the psalms and interaction with the Hebrew text will benefit greatly from this commentary. This series appears to be the natural successor to the older *Fortress* series of *Continental Commentaries*. And, just as Hans-Joachim Kraus' *Continental Commentary on the Psalms* was the automatic starting point if you wanted a close reading of the text, so Hossfeld and Zenger's three-volume series will become the starting point for a new generation of scholars looking for close readings of the text.

As the subtitle of Terrien's commentary suggests, his focus is more specific than that of the typical psalms commentary. Terrien also includes his own translations of the text which probably fall somewhere between Hossfeld and Zenger's formal correspondence on the one hand and Eaton's functional equivalence on the other. In each translation, Terrien is clear to distinguish the structure of the poem. He divides the text into its various strophes (where appropriate) and uses italicised and normal text to show repetition and transition in the various parts of the psalm. Determining the structure of a psalm can be very difficult and the reader will not necessarily always agree with Terrien's suggestions yet, on the whole, he makes a good case for his suggested analyses of the poems' structure.

So the reader will find more discussion of issues of structure and metre in this commentary but Terrien also moves on from there to offer brief analysis of the meaning of each strophe and discussion of the dating and theology of the text. The strength of Terrien's commentary is to be found in its unique focus. The reader who is interested in a psalms commentary that discusses textual issues in depth may not find what they are looking for here as the exegetical comment is fairly short. However, Terrien's knowledgeable discussion of the structure of each psalm, as well as his consideration of questions of form and metre, are the real strengths of this work. Such issues tend to receive only the briefest of consideration in 'normal' commentaries, so Terrien's work truly 'fills a gap in the market' and is a welcome addition to psalms scholarship.

Finally, Wilson's NIVAC commentary is an excellent example of thorough scholarship made accessible for the general audience. Wilson, in many ways, was the father

of the canonical approach to the Psalter which advocates the contextual interpretation of the psalms in relation to their neighbours or in linked groups. This approach comes through in Wilson's commentary where he encourages an awareness of the interpretative influence of a psalm's placement within a pairing or group. (Hossfeld and Zenger's commentary also devotes a good deal of discussion to questions of the canonical interpretation within the Book of Psalms.)

Wilson's commentary follows the usual pattern of the NIVAC series. Consideration of each psalm begins with the text from the NIV followed by a brief general comment and then discussion in three sections: 'Original Meaning', 'Bridging Contexts' and 'Contemporary Significance'. The discussion of 'Original Meaning' focuses on the exegetical examination of the text including questions of translation (although the NIV is used as the main text for discussion this does not inhibit the author's presentation of other translation options where necessary). The 'Bridging Contexts' section explains imagery, metaphors and common practices (amongst other things) that are found in the psalms but whose meaning may not be apparent to a contemporary audience. This section gives the opportunity to explain the significance of these images and practices. The 'Contemporary Significance' section goes on to suggest lines of application of the psalmic text within the realities of modern life. Obviously, such suggested application is a task that is immensely culture-bound. Although Wilson was clearly writing primarily in the American context, he does a good job of suggesting areas of relevance that are certainly applicable to most in the 'Western world' and which would probably be beneficial also to readers in the 'majority world'. Once again, this is a strong commentary that both student and Christian reader will benefit from greatly.

So, in summary, each of these commentaries is a helpful addition to the field of psalms studies. They each bring their own strengths to the table and each one makes a valuable contribution in its own way. So for close readings of the text Hossfeld and Zenger provide a great starting point; for discussion of issues of structure Terrien's commentary is great; for a more contemplative approach to the text Eaton's commentary is immensely helpful and for thorough discussion of the text and its application, at a level that is accessible to every thinking/reading Christian, Wilson's work is to be recommended.

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The Personification of Wisdom

Alice M. Sinnott

London: Ashgate, 2005

v + 208 pp., £50, hb, ISBN 0-7546-5124-x

SUMMARY

Alice Sinnott argues that the question of theodicy is the context for the creation and development of Wisdom in order to enable Judaism to survive in its Hellenistic context. This hypothesis is based on the lack of mention of sacred spaces and the similarities of Sophia's speech with exilic literature. While the background and commentary notes are beneficial, the hypothesis concerning the creation of Sophia is speculative in that it is based on arguments from silence and comparison. This book is recommended for a reader desiring an introduction to Lady Wisdom and a survey of recent scholarship on her.

RÉSUMÉ

La thèse d'Alice Sinnott, c'est que la question de la théodicée est à l'origine de la création et du développement de la sagesse et que celle-ci avait pour but de permettre au judaïsme de survivre dans le contexte hellénistique. Cette thèse se fonde sur l'absence de mention de lieux sacrés dans les écrits de sagesse, ainsi que sur les similitudes des discours de Sophia avec la littérature de l'exil. Les informations apportées sur l'arrière-plan et les notes explicatives sont utiles, mais l'hypothèse relative à la création de Sophia a un caractère hautement spéculatif dans la mesure où elle ne se fonde que sur des arguments tirés du silence ou sur des comparaisons. On peut recommander cet ouvrage aux lecteurs cherchant une présentation de Dame Sagesse et un survol des travaux académiques récents sur la sagesse.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Alice Sinnott argumentiert, dass die Theodizeefrage den Kontext für die Entstehung und die Entwicklung der Weisheit darstellt, deren Zweck in der Befähigung des Judentums lag, in der hellenistischen Welt zu überleben. Diese Hypothese basiert auf der fehlenden Erwähnung heiliger Räume und der Ähnlichkeiten der Weisheitsreden mit exilischer Literatur. Obwohl der Hintergrund und die Kommentaranmerkungen hilfreich sind, ist die Hypothese in Bezug auf die Entstehung der Weisheit spekulativ, da sie auf Argumente aus dem Schweigen beruhen und Vergleiche fehlen. Das Buch ist Lesern empfohlen, die nach einer Einführung in die Figur der Weisheit und nach einem Überblick über die neuere Forschung zum Thema verlangen.

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Alice Sinnott devotes her study to the subject of personified Wisdom in the OT and Deuterocanonical books in order to examine and provide explanations of why Lady Wisdom was created and how she developed. Sinnott begins by discussing possible antecedents for Wisdom, especially in Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources. The author surveys different approaches concerning such antecedents; whereas some see Wisdom as an original