

plagues narrative, and on the other to use it as a further example of a problematic text. Yet these two goals do not really mesh because it means that an intertext effectively controls the problems of this text rather than allowing the literary method employed elsewhere to address its own theological problems. Resolution of this dichotomy would have allowed this chapter to work better within the overall argument, though the potential of Ford's approach is still evident. In all, this is a solid contribution that effectively demonstrates the importance of the combination of theological awareness and literary sensitivity.

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*Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah*

Peter T. Vogt

Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006, xi + 242 pp.,  
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SUMMARY

Vogt challenges the dominant interpretations of centralisation in Deuteronomy, arguing that although it has a radical programme, it is neither demythologising nor secularising. Rather, it is a radical case for making Torah central to Israel's life. Vogt offers a fair critique of alternative interpretations and makes a good case for his own by his careful reading of the text. This is a stimulating reading of Deuteronomy which is worthy of serious consideration by future interpreters of the book.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Vogt fordert die herrschenden Interpretationen über die Zentralisierung im Deuteronomium heraus und argumentiert, dass das Buch zwar ein radikales Programm enthält, aber weder demythologisierend noch säkularisierend ist. Deuteronomium liefert vielmehr eine radikale Argumentation für das Anliegen, die Torah zum zentralen Element des Lebens Israels zu machen. Vogt bietet eine faire Kritik an den alternativen Interpretationen und liefert durch eine sorgfältige Behandlung des Textes gute Argumente für seinen eigenen Ansatz. Dies ist eine stimulierende Leseweise des Deuteronomiums, die es wert ist, von zukünftigen Auslegern des Buches ernsthaft in Betracht gezogen zu werden.

RÉSUMÉ

Vogt remet en cause les interprétations dominantes du thème de la centralisation dans le Deutéronome et soutient que, bien que ce livre propose un programme radical, il ne s'agit ni de démythologisation ni de sécularisation. C'est plutôt un plaidoyer pour donner à la Torah la place centrale dans la vie d'Israël. Vogt fait une critique pertinente des autres interprétations du livre et défend la sienne sur la base d'une étude soignée du texte. Son travail est stimulant

et mérite d'être pris en considération dans l'interprétation du Deutéronome.

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It is surprisingly easy for certain interpretations to become entrenched in biblical scholarship so that alternative approaches might not be recognised. An example of this might be the interpretation of the theme of centralisation in Deuteronomy which has often been interpreted as a radical attempt at creating a social structure centred on the sanctuary. In this revision of a doctoral thesis completed under Gordon McConville at Gloucester, Vogt places this interpretation under the microscope to argue that centralisation in Deuteronomy is about sacrifice and not social structure. Associated with the dominant approach to centralisation, many interpreters have seen Deuteronomy as both secularising and demythologising earlier texts dealing with worship. Although these latter issues do not depend upon the dominant interpretation of centralisation, they are closely bound up with it, which is why Vogt treats them together.

Demonstrating the book's origin as a doctoral thesis, Vogt begins by providing an overview of his methodology before taking the interpretation of Deuteronomy 16:18 – 18:22 as a case study in which to explore the way different scholars have interpreted the motif of centralisation and their relationship to the central ideology of the text. Vogt is able to show that there is considerable diversity in the interpretation of the text, even though all agree that centralisation is important, and that this pattern can be traced back through a century of Deuteronomy scholarship. This diversity does not stop the themes of secularisation and demythologisation from being important, though again there is diversity. It is this diversity in interpretation rather than fresh data that impacts the text that justifies this fresh reading of the text

Following this, successive chapters are devoted to Deuteronomy 1:9-18, 4:1 – 6:9, 12 and 16:18 – 18:22 to explore the issue of centralisation and its relationship to secularisation and demythologisation. Vogt is aware that he has not covered all the possible texts on his themes and so presents these as a set of sample readings which demonstrate the possibility of his alternative. That alternative is still radical, but rather than demythologising or secularising earlier texts, Vogt argues that Deuteronomy seeks to put *Torah* at the centre of the community's life. Thus, the social structures of 1:9-18 and 16:18-22 are concerned with elevating *Torah*, so that *Torah* is effectively what replaces Moses. This is why *Torah* needs to be passed on. Vogt also argues that Deuteronomy 12 does not require a social centralisation but only a centralisation of sacrifice, though he is open to the possibility that there might be more than one shrine, the key issue being that worship happens only at the place that Yahweh chooses.

Overall, Vogt's reading is persuasive, though some

issues remain. If sacrifice is centralised, and comes to be associated with the ruling social structures, would it not result in social centralisation, at least in terms of power structures? This, however, might be an issue which could result from the text's application rather than something inherent in its ideology. It would also have been useful to recognise that not all interpreters have argued for the associated ideas of demythologisation and secularisation. They are certainly prominent themes amongst some interpreters (albeit understood differently), but some have accepted the general theme of centralisation without also adopting these associated themes. Vogt's use of Wright and McConville indicates his awareness of this, so the point could have been made more clearly, but his contribution lies in the detail with which he has been able to establish his point. Vogt has thus provided a stimulating work that will need to be taken seriously by future interpreters of Deuteronomy.

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### *Joshua*

**Jerome E. D. Creach**

Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching

Louisville: John Knox Press, 2003, xiv + 135 pp.,  
£13.99, hb; ISBN10: 0-8042-3106-0

#### SUMMARY

Creach offers a reading of the book of Joshua that is particularly sensitive to the issue of violence presented in the text. Following the normal format of the Interpretation series, he shows considerable depth in wrestling with the narratives where this is particularly important, but the treatment of chapters 13-22 is unfortunately slight in comparison. Preachers looking for help with the narratives in the other chapters will find this an excellent resource, but the imbalance in treatment limits the work's value.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Creach bietet eine Leseweise des Josuabuches an, die der Gewalt, die im Text präsentiert wird, besondere Aufmerksamkeit widmet. In Aufnahme des üblichen Formats der Reihe zeigt er beachtlichen Tiefgang im Ringen mit den Erzählungen, in denen dieses Thema besonders wichtig ist, doch die Behandlung der Kapitel 13-22 ist vergleichsweise dünn. Prediger, die Hilfe in Bezug auf die Erzählungen in den anderen Kapiteln suchen, werden das Buch als exzellentes Hilfsmittel empfinden, doch die unausgewogene Behandlung schränkt den Wert des Gesamtwerkes ein.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Dans ce commentaire du livre de Josué, Creach s'intéresse particulièrement à la question de la violence et consacre un traitement approfondi aux récits où ce thème est important. Le traitement accordé aux chapitres 13-22 reste

en revanche bien succinct. Les prédicateurs trouveront d'excellentes idées dans le commentaire des récits, mais le déséquilibre réduit la valeur de l'ouvrage.

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The book of Joshua is problematic for many Christians. The level of violence it records, especially as this is manifested in the application of the ban where captured people were devoted to destruction, means it is not necessarily one that receives a great deal of attention in preaching today. Facing up to these issues, Creach attempts to read this text in a way that is sensitive to the concerns of contemporary readers, but also from the conviction that the community of faith is impoverished by its non-attendance to Joshua because of the way it shows a portrait of God and God's demands on his people that the modern church needs to hear. As one expects in a series concerned with assisting preachers, this is a theologically committed reading of the text, one that is particularly concerned with bridging the gap between text and world.

In a brief introduction, Creach sets out his guiding assumptions about the book. He largely follows the dominant critical position that sees Joshua as part of the Deuteronomistic History and which therefore is particularly concerned to address the needs of the exile, though he does not follow this through in a reductionist fashion. Rather, the position of the exiles is often the way in which contemporary readers are able to approach the text. He is also careful to explain that he does not treat Joshua as a work of history in the modern sense of the word, arguing that our role as readers is to enter Joshua's world and have our history and world shaped by it. Doing this inevitably means wrestling with the issue of violence as it is presented in the text, and Creach signals his intent to do this by devoting a considerable portion of his introduction to it, arguing that Joshua's authors do not treat violence in a simplistic way, and that their own wrestling with this issue can guide us as contemporary readers.

The body of the commentary then works this out in the traditional manner for this series, offering exegetical essays on each passage rather than offering detailed comment on particular points, though of course where necessary to support a particular conclusion Creach does not hesitate to provide detail. The reading offered is clear and preachers will find much that is helpful, though there are always points on which one might differ. As is flagged by the introduction, Creach takes time to explore the issue of violence as it occurs in various passages, often pausing for extended theological reflections. Yet there is also something rather curious in this because it means that the issue of the occupation of the land is largely passed over. I suspect that the allocation of the land in chapters 13-22 will be difficult for most preachers simply because it seems rather dull or irrelevant (though in fact these chapters stress Yahweh's faithfulness in giving the land), but those looking for assistance here will be largely disap-