

that the words “the destruction of Babylon” are an overstatement about the events of 539 B.C. and should be replaced by “the capture of Babylon.”

Doubts have been expressed by some scholars regarding the accuracy of Persian and Greek histories as presented in Daniel’s book. Alleged inaccuracies in Jewish chronology as presented in Daniel 9 have also been proposed, betraying “the *a priori* emphasis on the Maccabean period in the critical interpretation of Daniel 9” (140). Gaston concludes that Daniel’s prophetic synopsis is entirely accurate for the level of detail it includes (147). In the conclusion to the book, this conviction is broadened and applied to the whole book of Daniel. The author says that there are strong reasons to believe that the stories about Daniel and his friends are rooted in historical events and centered on real individuals (150). Similarly, to rob Daniel’s “visions and prophecies of their authority is to rob them of their purpose” (155).

Following a conclusion, the book contains a bibliographical list of selected studies on Daniel, past and present. Also included are several appendices, including genealogical charts, lists of kings, and a chronological table. Unfortunately, indices to biblical references or to modern authors are lacking.

Gaston’s work can be commended on several accounts, but I will limit my comments here to only two. First, I appreciate his insistence on the importance of the historicity of the book’s hero. This approach stands in contrast with Higher Critical scholarship on one hand, and very conservative interpretations on the other, both of which have tendencies to detach passages from Daniel’s book (especially prophetic ones) from his life and career in Babylon. This type of approach to the book of Daniel is inadequate, and Gaston is correct in stating categorically that “a fictional prophet cannot utter factual prophecy” (155).

The second commendable element in Gaston’s work is his determination to connect debates on the historicity of biblical events and persons with the practical issues of faith that affect the lives of believers and the way they relate to God and his revelation. To the reader of today who may wonder why the historical issues about Daniel’s book are so important, Gaston provides a straightforward answer: the historical issues justify the believer in taking the book seriously. Although I am not advocating here the concept of biblical inerrancy, I still believe that the sacred text begs its reader’s respect and trust. These two are the main reasons for which I recommend Gaston’s work to all serious students of Daniel’s book.

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Gorman, Michael J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, rev. and expanded ed. Peabody: Hendrikson, 2009. 286 pp. Paperback, \$19.95.

Michael J. Gorman teaches at Princeton Theological Seminary and St. Mary’s Seminary and University. He considers Bruce Manning Metzger his mentor; in fact, the book is dedicated to his memory. The current work is

a revision of *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* (2001), which is itself a revision of *Texts and Contexts* (1994, 1998). In essence, it is the fourth revision of the author's original publication. In 2005, Hendrikson published a companion volume, *Scripture: An Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation*. The companion is truly ecumenical; it is the work of fifteen Protestant (including the author) and Catholic scholars, all of whom are faculty members of the Ecumenical Institute of Theology at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore.

Elements of Biblical Exegesis is founded on the notion that the task of exegesis is the careful historical, literary, and theological analysis of the biblical text. As a result, the author prefers to focus on the methodology of the synchronic approach, which deals primarily with the final form of the biblical text. He believes that exegetes of all levels primarily meet the text as it stands in the biblical canon rather than engaging or interacting with the original source or the development stage of the text. The *synchronic approach* is not concerned with oral traditions or hypothetical sources; rather, it analyzes the text in relation to the context or worldview in which it first appeared. In his opinion, for a book that is concerned with the elements of exegesis, this methodology is better suited to achieve his goal. Whereas he does not invalidate the value of the *diachronic approach* (historical-critical method), which deals mainly with the formation of the text, he devotes limited attention to this methodology because it requires technical historical and linguistics skills that not all readers possess (23). Perhaps the most revealing reason he notes for avoiding the diachronic approach is the fact that in recent years this methodology has come under critical questioning as a viable tool for biblical exegesis. Another approach to biblical exegesis is the *existential approach*, which deals primarily with a fundamental spiritual encounter with God through meditation on the text, an instrumental approach that is also known as *theological* or *transformative*. The author also limits the use of this approach not only because it requires sophisticated theological perspectives not readily available to the average reader, but primarily because this methodology relies heavily on elements that the synchronic approach already covers, therefore accomplishing a similar goal. The eclectic and integrated approach of Gorman's elementary methodology proposes a systematic approach to exegesis that addresses three major areas that his definition of the task points out, while maintaining a delicate balance of the scholarly and scientific demands of biblical research: (1) the academic need for seminary students to write successful exegesis papers without being overwhelmed with unnecessary details at such an early stage, (2) the pastoral need of ministers who write sermons on a weekly basis, and (3) the acknowledgment of the divine and supernatural origin of the Scriptures.

Perhaps the author's most valuable philosophical contribution to the task of exegesis, in my opinion, is his threefold view of exegesis as investigation,

conversation, and art. As an investigation, exegesis involves asking thoughtful questions about the multifaceted dimensions of the biblical text; Gorman's elements are built on this premise. All the sections of investigation throughout the book model how these questions are asked and which questions are appropriate to ask depending on the type of literature the exegete encounters in the NT, be it the Gospels, Acts, Epistles or Revelation. The task of questioning the text as a whole—its historical context (tradition, source, and redaction), its contextual setting and intertextual (literal and cultural) revelation, and implications—clearly guides the student in understanding the importance of asking the proper questions that a particular type of text demands. As a conversation, Gorman sees the task of the exegete as one who carefully “listens” to various views regarding the text under analysis from informed sources in order to learn from the process and, if necessary, adjusts the conclusions of the literary, historical, and cultural investigations. This aspect of Gorman's approach is assumed or ignored in other approaches such as the synchronic and existential approach and often are not included in modern methodologies. Yet it is essential for those who are learning to exegete Scripture to learn this humble aspect of a careful investigation—namely, to consider the views of others, even those with whom we disagree; this is a time for reflection and self-evaluation. Finally, the author sees the task of exegesis as an art which differentiates his work, in his estimation, from other authors, an art that requires carefully following the steps needed to arrive at a sound conclusion. Rather than just applying principles, rules, or research skills, he believes that exegetes need to use their imagination, intuition, sensitivity, and openness to be creative in the way the tools of exegesis are used. This threefold approach to exegesis fosters the preparation of a living document that theoretically could be updated as new discoveries are made in the process of investigation, implementation, reflection, and refinement.

It is appropriate at this time, however, to mention that Gorman assumes that almost everyone using his elements of exegesis will work from a translation rather than Greek or Hebrew, even though the exegete may have these language skills. Whereas Gordon Fee's *New Testament Exegesis* is founded on the analysis of the original text, Gorman's *Elements* focuses more on the analysis of the translated text, devoting just a few paragraphs to generally mentioning certain tools for exegesis in the original language. His intent is for beginning exegetes to follow his general principles whether they are using a translation or the original biblical text. The downside to his approach, in my opinion, is that it does not provide a tutorial for how these tools are to be used; Fee, on the other hand, offers a basic guide so that the student can get started using them immediately. Another aspect of Gorman's methodology to consider is that his approach is only suitable for analyzing short passages of Scripture, at most an entire chapter. Other methodologies, including Fee's, are designed to analyze entire biblical books. This could perhaps be due to

two things: the lack of support for analysis of the original text, and the fact that the book has been designed primarily for beginning students of exegesis and pastors, while eliminating the unnecessary details of advanced exegesis at this early stage. As a result, Gorman does not include a section for Greek or Hebrew word analysis, a guide to the Critical Apparatus, or a Lexicon.

The book may appeal to general audiences seeking to master the basics of the task of biblical exegesis. It could also be useful for students beginning to explore the Scriptures from a sound platform. Pastors would benefit greatly by adopting basic principles of exegesis to inform their weekly sermons. Perhaps the strength of the book lies in the time it spends in defining the task and preparing the student to understand the implications of exegesis and the enormous task that lies ahead as he or she matures to more advanced skills. Fee's methodology, on the other hand, does not provide this type of background so critical to those who embark on the journey toward fine scholarship; rather it assumes that the student already understands the issues of exegesis. In Gordon's estimation, many approach the study of the Scriptures loosely; a methodology that is too complex or that assumes the rudiments may discourage serious students who would like to get started. This is where Gorman's methodology fulfills its purpose by providing an insightful guide that can inspire students, laity, and ministers alike to take the study of the Scriptures more seriously by applying solid elementary principles with effective scholarly skills that can lead to sound conclusions.

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Hackett, Jo Ann. *A Basic Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010. 327 pp. Hardcover, \$39.95.

Jo Ann Hackett is Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas, Austin. Before this she worked for many years at Harvard University as Professor of the Practice of Biblical Hebrew and Northwest Semitic Epigraphy. Her experience with teaching and researching Biblical Hebrew adds to the merit of this book.

According to the author, the book is meant to be taught in one semester or quarter. It is implied that the target audience is graduate and undergraduate students as they are first introduced to Biblical Hebrew. The book is divided into thirty lessons, has a detailed table of contents, suggested bibliography for further reading, and a useful index. The introduction includes a section on how to use the book, which is helpful to both teachers and students and which helps to maximize the use of the book. The book also contains eight helpful appendices. Of particular notice is appendix D, "Clues for Finding the Root of Weak Consecutive Preterites," which is a tool rarely found in Biblical Hebrew textbooks.

The book is written in clear and simple language, conveying all the information students need without overwhelming them with unnecessary