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Review of Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*

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Daniel 1 was probably an independent court legend rewritten to serve as an introduction to Daniel 1–6. Daniel 2 is a reworked court contest revolving around dream interpretation. Daniel 3 is a court conflict that does not mention Daniel. W. discusses its oral nature at some length, but does not relate the idea of oral tradition to the other stories. Daniel 4–6 and Bel and the Dragon are analyzed at great length. A large part of the analysis is taken up with detailed discussion and separate English translations of the OG version which W. considers to be the best witness to the original form of the material in these three chapters. In a brief conclusion W. notes that the Daniel stories, in their redactional evolution, display the addition of the motif of the ethnic identity of the Jew at a foreign court. They also display some tendencies to shift toward the wisdom court legend.

W. presents a similar, although shorter, analysis of the Book of Esther and its sources and redactional evolution. It is composed from several originally separate sources of which only the “Mordecai and Haman” source fits with the wisdom court legend genre.

W.’s work is clearly written and presented. He is thorough in his review of the secondary literature and he makes many valuable and interesting observations on the literature and on his biblical texts. However, his thesis that there was a specific ancient genre, the wisdom court legend, is not well-supported by his arguments and textual evidence.

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EDWIN M. YAMAUCHI, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990). Pp. 578. \$34.95.

In his preface Yamauchi states that it is his intention to provide a survey of recent work in Persian history, archaeology, and religion, as it relates to the study of the Bible. In this he has succeeded. This work illustrates many of the important advantages, but also some of the disadvantages, from the survey style. As a reference tool Y.’s survey is an interesting compendium of recent scholarship, but its use should be in the context of some circumspection with regard to Y.’s own agenda on the issue of biblical historical accounts.

Yamauchi’s work begins with a chapter on the Medes in general, and then progresses to focused chapters on five important Persian rulers who are of direct importance for postexilic biblical history, namely: Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I. This is followed by four chapters that summarize archaeological information on the cities of Susa, Ecbatana, Pasargadae, and Persepolis. Finally, four chapters address subjects that are of interest to analysis of Persian history: Persia and the Greeks, Zoroastrianism, the Magi, and Mithraism. The “select” bibliography is thorough and helpful.

In each chapter Y. surveys the secondary literature on various questions related to the subject. For example, the chapter on Cyrus begins, as all chapters on kings, with a brief discussion of the etymology of the name itself; a survey of biblical

references followed by references in cuneiform and then in classical sources (e.g., Herodotus for Cyrus). This is followed by a survey of biographical details of the life of Cyrus. The discussions vary according to the evidence available, of course. The chapter on Cambyses, for example, dwells at length on his North African campaigns, discussing such issues as Cambyses' supposed interference in Egyptian religious practices (the killing of the Apis Bull as a case in point, from which Y. exonerates Cambyses). Cambyses' alleged actions may represent a significant exception to the Persian reputation for toleration, a reputation supported in the biblical portraits of Persian rulers. The chapters on capital cities survey archaeological information, touching on some issues of historical interest to the biblical reader and interestingly also continue to note significant references to the cities in post-Second Temple Judaism and even Islam. The chapter summarizing Zoroastrianism is lengthy and helpful, and includes an interesting discussion of the old theory that Zoroastrianism may have had a significant influence on Judaism after the exile. Y. affirms the more recent doubts of scholars like Neusner on this issue. Throughout, his analysis of the secondary literature and discussions inevitably highlights the gaps and spotty nature of the evidence. Y. himself carefully avoids any unifying speculation, although at times such a synthesis or interpretation of evidence might have allowed the work to read a bit less clinically.

Yamauchi clearly favors a more conservative and confident reading of the Bible as reliable history. Y. states, for example, that recent "documents and archaeological discoveries" provide evidence for the authenticity of the Cyrus edict in Ezra 1, despite the growing critical consensus that whatever historical reliability any of the edicts in Ezra have, the most likely candidate is the edict of Artaxerxes. The Cyrus edict is usually considered a Jewish creation based upon the edict of Artaxerxes. Secondly, Y. argues for a very early date for the Book of Esther (during the reign of Xerxes I, 485-465 B.C.E.) and continues in his chapter on Xerxes to argue in favor of the plausibility of much of the story as a "historical narrative" (p. 239).

It is unfortunate that Joel Weinberg's discussions of the postexilic community as a temple-centered group did not receive more discussion, since it has had prominent discussion in recent scholarly meetings on the postexilic period, where Eastern European and Soviet work is gaining a hearing.

It seems to this reviewer that the most valuable use of Y.'s work would be as a beginning reference for work on particular figures (Cyrus, Darius) or issues (Zoroastrianism in the early Achaemenid rulers, for example) which would then lead into a careful reading of the secondary literature cited therein. As such a reference tool, Y. has provided a great service, but one might be forgiven for being cautious about his discussions regarding issues directly related to biblical critical debates, which tend to buttress a conservative assessment of the historical reliability of the Bible.

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RICHARD BAUCKHAM, *The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989). Pp. xi + 166. \$11.95.

The publisher classifies this book as practical theology. Its aim is to foster "an understanding of the political relevance of the Bible" by offering a "course in political hermeneutics" (p. 1). The first chapter outlines its theory and the rest of the book