

(139). They also serve to encourage believers, and as “an anticipation of the new creation that is coming!” Nevertheless, now that we have the Bible, those miracles are no longer needed, and therefore are not common (140). Final argument that Schreiner gives points out that all the great reformers in the past were cessationists, adhering to a similar theology that he holds. Although he admits that they could have been wrong since they are fallible, “we should not be quick to depart from their perspective” (140).

In his epilogue, Schreiner reiterates that spiritual gifts are “not a first-order matter.” Evangelical Christians should learn to speak about these issues with love, “in ways that are charitable and kind” (142). Therefore, he decided to “end this book by saying, ‘If I have the right view of spiritual gifts, but I don’t have love, then I am nothing.’” The book thus ends on a similar note as it begins, and even as it consistently works through on its pages.

This is a pastoral book about gifts, and not an academic treatise. It teaches us not only its topic but also how to think through contestable issues with brothers and sisters who disagree with us. Its relative shortness and simplicity, as well as “Discussion Questions,” show that it is available for both individual and group study. There are, of course, exegetically and theologically, more technical books about spiritual gifts from both camps. After reading this book, I would recommend it as a primer that helps us to understand both the contours of the debate and the way we are called to argue with love. Indeed, if Augustine said “I believe in so that I may understand,” this book shows us that we need to love so that we might debate.

Miroslav Balint-Feudvarski

John H. Walton

Old Testament Theology for Christians: From Ancient Context to Enduring Belief

Downers Grove, Illinois, USA, IVP Academic, 2017, 306.

To this day, the Old Testament is still misinterpreted and often misused or even considered obsolete by many Christians, concedes Walton, thus the key aim of the textbook is to change those notions. The book intends to aid churches in a better understanding and to strengthen the believer’s faith (14) as he tries to “build a bridge between academy and the church” (26). Walton’s approach is quite different; it is not a reiterate of others; because of that, it will alter some of the readers’ “old” views and perspectives of the Old Testament stories.

Walton provides us with insight into his views and understanding of the Old Testament theology, taking into account the importance of in-depth reading,

Israel's historical context, and worldview, thereby comparing it to the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature (e.g., Mesopotamia and Egypt). Walton assures that his theological approach is "intentionally Christian and broadly evangelical." His reading of the Old Testament is "from an Israelite perspective" rather than from a New Testament outlook (25). The main guiding principle from the author is that the Bible is permeated from beginning to end with one central theme; the presence of God and his relationship to the people. The Old Testament and the New Testament hence make a holistic story and give us a broader revelation of God, his purpose for humanity, and enduring (cosmic) plan.

Walton arranged the book in eight lengthily chapters. Every chapter is organized in almost the same manner, attending to the most fundamental theological themes of the Old Testament. There is a pattern to every chapter, first, a thorough presentation of Israelite's view and understanding of the relevant topics. Next, a contrasting and comparing to the ANE texts get the reader a sense of how Israel probably has come to their understanding of God and all creation. The second part of every chapter is a study of the continuity or discontinuity with New Testament theology, which helps to tie everything together.

The introductory chapter gives us the methodology and approach to the Old Testament theology that Walton utilizes in the book. Some of those hermeneutical topics are: the Old Testament should be understood in its ancient context with still keeping in mind the transformation through divine revelation (christological goal); divine presence and relationship with God are fundamental; going beyond traditional exegesis albeit not criticizing traditional theology; the Old Testament is authoritative in its own right; and deliberate critical but evangelically rooted. His interpretation is "authority-based, theocentrically focused" (3).

In the second chapter, Walton starts with the topic *Yahweh and the Gods*. I think this to be one of the more critical chapters, given that this issue of Yahweh's uniqueness is one of the most discussed matters still today. Some would probably argue he has not given enough consideration to other interpretations, yet he has presented a substantial view and understanding successfully within the ANE context. The in-depth look at the ANE worldview and practice is exceptional, and I found it helpful in expanding my knowledge of the Old Testament. The topic of God's attributes is fascinating; first, he starts with the viewpoint of Israel and then setting it in the broader context of the ANE. The conclusion is that the divine community was understood in a "different manner" from the rest of the ancient world. The Israelites are God's people "brought into divine community, made parties to a covenant with their God, and drawn into the identity of Yahweh as they were designated holy as he is holy" (65). So exclusive worship, covenant relationship, divine presence, and Yahweh as a redeemer stands out as continuing in the New Testament theology (67-68).

Chapter three lays out the theology of the creation in the *Cosmos and Humanity*, thereby being very cautious not to read into the text what is not there, would not make any sense in the ancient understanding (e.g., Big Bang Theory). Our theology of creation comes from the Old Testament and we learn that “Yahweh is the one who gave (and continues to give) shape, organization, order, and purpose to the cosmos, including people and the society in which they live. We see that Israelite creation theology was much closer to that of the rest of the ancient world than it is to ours” (81). Old Testament theology focuses on human role and origins, human identity, and functions. The Israelites found their identity and meaning in their God-given status as his covenant people. The understanding of human nature in the Old Testament is basic but still stands as true today and the purpose of all humanity is to be in a relationship with God.

Chapter four explains and illuminates the topic of *Covenant and Kingdom* in the Old Testament. The covenant between Yahweh and his people was based on election, consequently giving a new status to the people. This offered status entitled the people to be in a relationship with their God and to engage with God in his plan and purpose. This kind of covenant was certainly a novelty in the ancient world for other gods made covenants only with kings, not entire nations. Walton states: “The covenant should be viewed as a formal relationship that provides a mechanism for revelation; it is then itself the foundation for an ever-deepening understanding of what it means to have an identity-rooted relationship with Yahweh” (113). Further, the author unpacks the development of the covenant in four vital phases: *relationship* (e.g., Abraham and his family); *dwelling* (e.g., Torah for living in the presence); *reigning* (Kingship); and *saving* (New covenant in the blood of Christ). The given land is part of their covenant with God and thus becomes sacred space on earth for Yahweh, who dwells among them. The author finishes the chapter with what we take from that covenant into the New Testament theology. And he rightly points out that the covenant is not a plan of salvation in the Old Testament, although looking back from the New Testament, we recognize the soteriological aspect which the Israelites would not have seen.

The next chapter handles the theme of *Temple and Torah*. Here permeates the idea of order in creation, channeled through a sacred space that is upheld by God’s people in purity. In detail, Walton gives the reader insight in all the significant elements (i.e., rituals and purity/holiness) and their relevance in the worship and service of God’s people. Further, the law should not be seen as a set of rules (i.e., the Torah and the Decalogue), rather as ultimate wisdom given to the people’s leaders, helping them to create Israel’s identity and sustain order within the community as against to forming a new society. It is not merely about ethics (although that is one of the results); instead it is about reflecting “the holy status that he had conferred on them in the world in which they lived” (161). Walton

offers at the end of the chapter an attention-grabbing reflection on identity (e.g., Israel's corporal identity vs. New Testament individual identity in Christ) and holiness as a behavioral paradigm that supports and maintains Yahweh's order in the land.

Sin and Evil, the title of the sixth chapter, is by far the most interesting given all the hot discussion and various opinions on that subject. And Walton starts with an outlandish notion to the modern reader: "The ancient world did not define evil in moral terms" (183). Alternately, evil has to do with order vs. non-order/disorder. The Old Testament viewpoint is that sin is more disruption in the human-divine relationship, where people fail to accomplish their divine calling and recognize their given limitations (188). He then clarifies and dismantles the misunderstandings of the terms: demons, Satan (i.e., the devil), and the serpent. Walton rightly points out that the Old Testament demonstrates that Yahweh has no (worthy) opponent and does not wrestle with anyone for his reign (195). Thus, the reference about the fall of "Satan" in the Old Testament should be interpreted within its cultural and given context of the particular book, not within the New Testament understanding (201).

Chapter seven is about the *Salvation and Afterlife* in the Hebrew Bible. The reader is provided with insight into the ancient outlook on salvation and the afterlife, which is vastly different from our modern beliefs. The concept of individual salvation, heaven/hell, and resurrection is basically non-existent in the Old Testament. For Walton, this means that Israel's beliefs about these matters will assist us in clarifying the focus of our faith and real purpose. Namely that we are saved and given a new identity to co-work with God (i.e., saved for), it is not merely about "not going to hell" (i.e., saved from or benefits) (259-60).

Lastly, chapter eight serves as a *Conclusion* to the whole book. I like that Walton takes up often asked questions and breaks them down, thereby demystifying them and leaving the reader with a better understanding conveyed by the Old Testament. Walton is not afraid to wrestle with difficult questions (e.g., has God changed, the compromised reputation of God, current issues that the Bible does not address—science, gender issues, moral questions) yet manages to keep a high view of Scripture. He exhibits which role and what value the Old Testament theology plays in the construction of modern theology. In the end are brief summaries of the continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament theology that are helpful tools for further study and quick referencing.

In summary, the book holds what his author has intended it to be on all accounts. It inflames a new passion and interest for a foreign and distant world that is undeniably connected to our Christian faith. It is written expertly, with a lot of useful references, tables, charts, and separate explanations of theological concepts and vital terms. Therefore, the book serves well as an excellent source for

Old Testament studies in theological and Bible schools and churches. One could complain about the length of the book and Walton's tendency to repeat himself. Still, it takes not away from the quality and value of the book itself. His theology is sound argued and well researched, supplying insight into new trends in the field of Old Testament studies. Additionally, he provides diverse academic opinions and compares them to his own. Albeit, he is humble enough to admit that we do not have all the answers. The relevance of the book lies in the author's words: "Old Testament theology must be approached independently from the New Testament theology, through New Testament theology cannot be done in isolation from Old Testament theology" (20-21).

Monika Bajić

Christopher Ash

The Book Your Pastor Wishes You Would Read (But is Too Embarrassed to Ask)

The Good Book Company, Epsom, 2019., 128.

This book is not for me, but it would be great for you. Unless you are a pastor like me. Too often Christians hear a sermon or read a book about a certain issue and immediately think of a few persons who should hear or read that. But that is not what I mean. I am not simply seeing how others would benefit from the content of this book, while thinking that it has nothing to teach me. But, this book has been written by an ex-pastor for Christians who have pastors shepherding them. In the author's own words, he wants "to speak to *you*, an ordinary church member... about how to care for your pastor" (p. 10).

Writing from past personal experience of being a pastor for over a decade and later being a director of a training ministry, which allowed him to draw insights both subjective and objective in nature, Christopher Ash sets out to help church members help their pastor to do their ministry not only well but also with joy. He starts by stating that care for pastors is actually self-care that every church should be eager to do. "We all need to look after our pastors and—paradoxically—it is in our best interest to do so. If you and I do not care for our pastors, then they will not be able to care for us" (p. 11). In the *Introduction*, he gives a brief vision of how great it would be for everyone if this mutual care would be done in local churches and how that would cause growth in Christ-likeness because of which our churches would be more desirable to be part of.

Before giving his readers seven virtues which would cause joy in pastors if church members would learn and implement them, he starts by showing that pastors are people too, because people tend to see pastors "at their most polished"