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Review: Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament

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discovered from Mesopotamia. This makes it unlikely that it functioned as a law code. Furthermore, there is a strong propagandistic aspect regarding the medium on which the laws were written and the flamboyantly self-flattering prologue.

Lastly, Niehaus infers that since deities were seen to impart law through a mediator that was often the king, deities and kings were in a covenantal relationship (pp. 56–57). Not only is his view of the origin of law contested (e.g. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought* 287–97), but there is no evidence of a covenantal relationship of this sort was ever thought to exist in cultures outside of ancient Israel. No doubt kings were in covenantal relationships with other kings, but I know of no text that outlines or discusses a covenant between a deity and a king or anyone else for that matter. Because of this I believe the notion of being in covenant with a god was particular to ancient Israel.

Lastly, Niehaus represents his conception of the relationship of gods and nations with two charts: (1) Egypt: Amon Ra > Pharaoh > warfare > covenant with conquered > temple service; and (2) Bible: God > Jesus > warfare > new covenant > temple service (p. 173). This chart and the associated discussion are simplistic. It is akin to saying one could substitute Jesus for Nirvana and change Buddhism into Christianity.

There is much of great value in this book. For instance, I joyously agree with Niehaus that Jesus is the focal point of all of history, and the author's approach is inspiring and refreshing. However, I think that in his desire to identify parallels, Niehaus at times has reshaped or overly simplified aspects of history and culture within the ANE to fit predetermined categories so that they better correspond with alleged biblical parallels.

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Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament. By Christopher J. H. Wright. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007, 232 pp., \$15.00 paper.

Having previously written the volumes *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (1992) and *Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament* (2006), by his own confession it seemed only natural that Christopher Wright would complete the trilogy with a third installment, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament*.

Although it would be inaccurate to describe Wright's work as devotional reading, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* is not a volume written exclusively for the scholarly community. While devoid of the research typically associated with scholarly writing (little citation and no bibliography), the book nonetheless takes the reader through the process of evaluating the OT text through the eyes of one trained in the field of OT scholarship. Wright capably demonstrates proper theological methodology while performing limited exegetical evaluation of the biblical text, demonstrating a biblical theological approach that can be grasped by the common reader.

In spite of the title, Wright's book is not a treatise on the systematic presentation of the first person of the Trinity in the OT. Rather, it develops two interrelated themes. In chapters 1, 4, and 7, the main emphasis is on knowing God as Father through the evaluation of the Father/Son metaphor. In chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8, the primary focus is on *knowing* God the Father in the same manner in which OT saints were called to *know* Yahweh their God. Indeed, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* is as much a book on simply *knowing* God as it is a systematic look at God the Father as distinct from God the Son or God the Holy Spirit.

Approached from a biblical theological perspective rather than a systematic one, Wright treats the depiction of God as "Father" in the realm of metaphor rather than

"Person," gleaned knowledge of God through the details of this very human metaphor. The fact that Wright treats the subject from a biblical theological perspective is one of the greatest strengths of his work, and thus his survey is firmly rooted in an inductive approach to the text, generally avoiding the pitfalls of proof texting so common among similar treatments.

While the fatherly metaphor is often the subject of Wright's descriptive survey, it is not the exclusive metaphor treated within the book. He also examines other metaphors by which God revealed himself throughout the OT, primarily selecting those that describe the relationship between God and his people in terms of familial relationship. These include the metaphors of the adoptive parent/child relationship and the more distant husband/bride relationship. While a descriptive picture of God may best be derived from the pages of the OT through the means of metaphor, Wright is not exclusively interested in a survey of how God is described in the OT. He is more keenly concerned with how one might come to know God through the OT in terms of relationship rather than by way of description.

In reference to the theme of *knowing* Yahweh, Wright masterfully surveys the means through which God is known in the OT. These include the retold story of Israel through a theology of remembrance (chaps. 2 and 3); the means to knowing God through the experience of prayer (chap. 5); the knowledge of God reflected in the prophetic call to justice (chap. 6); and the knowledge of God derived through a theology of prophetic hope (chap. 8). The emphasis on *knowing* God comes to a practical culmination in the final chapter as the knowledge of God is set in correspondence with a call to faith, wherein the only way to truly know God is to approach him by faith.

Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament is a well-written, insightful survey of two corresponding themes, suffering only in its lack of structural organization between the twin themes. Among its strongest attributes are the broad cross-section of OT literature surveyed; poetic, prophetic, and narrative genres are equally represented. Few weaknesses exist, although some readers may detect traces of a personal agenda in reference to geo-political commentary in chapter 8. Also, some may question the frequent references to the NT in a book purporting to focus on the OT. Nevertheless, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* provides a competent and applicable contribution to the evangelical community in the realm of OT theology.

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New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, Vol. 1B: Genesis 11:27-50:26. By Kenneth A. Mathews. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005, 960 pp., \$32.99.

Kenneth A. Mathews has produced a well-written, detailed commentary on the patriarchal narratives that should appeal to both pastor and scholar. This volume is a continuation of Mathews's NAC commentary on Genesis 1:1-11:26 (1996). While the commentary is based on the text of the NIV, Mathews interacts with the Hebrew Bible throughout the commentary. Issues of authorship and literary structure were covered in the previous volume in the New American Commentary series.

A fifty-eight page introduction covers issues related to the patriarchal narratives. Of major importance is the ongoing debate with the so-called "minimalist" school that denies the patriarchal narratives have any historical value whatsoever. Mathews surveys the history of the dialogue between those who place value on the biblical literature as well as archaeology and those who emphasize the archaeological record to the exclusion