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Review: Ezekiel 20-48

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Many readers will not agree that the first line of Ecclesiastes 8:13 need be viewed as a gloss, or that 12:1 need be rendered "Remember your grave" (instead of "Remember your Creator"). These shortcomings, however, do not detract materially from the helpfulness of this volume on two difficult but practical and valuable books of the Bible.

Roy B. Zuck

The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East. By John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990. 545 pp. Paper, \$42.50.

This impressive volume addresses many issues related to wisdom and wise men in biblical literature and in the extrabiblical writings of the ancient Near East. In 36 chapters, 30 authors discuss many aspects of the role of wise men and women, and of their writings and views. Some of the better-known authors in wisdom literature include, among others, Brueggemann, Crenshaw, Fishbane, Murphy, and Whybray.

What place did the sage and his writings have in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Ugarit? What were the positions of the sages in royal courts of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Ugarit? Is there sufficient evidence of a royal court or school in Israel in which sages were educated? Did the sapiential sayings of Proverbs originate with Solomon and others, or with the populace? What is the role of the sage in other biblical literature such as the Pentateuch and the historical and prophetic books?

What rhetorical forms and sapiential themes are used in the Book of Job? Is it legitimate to speak of Job as a sage? Were his friends sages? How does Ecclesiastes fare in the wisdom tradition? What is the role of the sage in other works such as the pseudepigrapha and Qumran literature? These are some of the many questions related to wisdom literature that are addressed in these essays.

Perdue's chapter on "Cosmology and the Social Order in the Wisdom Tradition" gives insights into order and conflict as viewed by the sages. He suggests that the sages saw order as "correctness (*ṣedeq*), righteousness (*ṣēdāqâ*), and conformity (*ṣaddîq*). . . . For something to be *ṣdq* meant to exist in a state of order, correctness, and reliability. . . . *Ṣedeq* also suggested a moral order operative in the universe . . . wise action and thoughts led to well-being, while foolish and subversive actions culminated in destruction" (pp. 458-59). Order in the universe, Perdue suggests, was the framework around which the wise men interpreted life. Since they searched for and observed the order and regularity underlying the cosmos and society, "sapiential cosmology is rooted in a theology of creation" (p. 463). Wisdom also is concerned with the ethical order of human conduct.

Anyone interested in pursuing sapiential studies in or out of the Bible would benefit from consulting this excellent volume. The editors are to be commended for providing this work. Gammie was professor of biblical literature at the University of Tulsa, and Perdue is professor of Hebrew Bible and dean of Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University.

Roy B. Zuck

Ezekiel 20–48. By Leslie C. Allen. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 29. Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990. 301 pp. \$24.99.

Allen was asked to complete the commentary on Ezekiel after the death of William Brownlee, who wrote on Ezekiel 1–19. Allen states in the intro-

duction that he seeks to steer a course between the older, higher critical approach and recent, literary approach. Overall he appears to have been successful in walking this middle methodological path.

Allen believes that most of the book in its present form came from Ezekiel himself, but he believes that other "inspired hands" were involved in the completed work (p. xxv). He assumes one original form of the (redacted) text in opposition to Tov, who has two texts coming from two redactors.

Ezekiel prophesied the fall of Tyre in chapter 26. However, Ezekiel 29:17-21 says that the results of the siege were less than satisfying to the Babylonians and that Yahweh would give to Nebuchadnezzar Egypt instead of Tyre. Several attempts have been made to reconcile these two prophecies. Allen says that the prophecy was fulfilled in general, but that the people in exile criticized Ezekiel because the details were unfulfilled, and that God then gave him the new prophecy to encourage him when criticized.

Allen interprets the critical passage in 28:11-19 in light of a possible variant account of the Garden of Eden. Cautious about the issue of mythology underlying the "holy mountain of God," he rejects any effort to see an allusion to Satan in the account.

His treatment of Ezekiel 37 and the restoration is unsatisfactory. The literal exile (represented by the dead bones) should be followed by a literal restoration of some kind (not merely an inclusion of Israel in the church). This vibrant language of Ezekiel leads one to look for an eschatological fulfillment in the restoration of the people of Israel both in the "second Exodus" and in the messianic age to come. Allen says that since the ideal represented in the "two sticks" was not fulfilled in Judah's later history, the prophecy will be (is being) fulfilled in the church. But why not allow a place in the eschaton for its fulfillment? "Joseph's aim" should read "Josiah's aim" on page 195.

Allen admits that the chapters on the temple (Ezek. 40-48) were presumably presented as normative for the future. But since this restoration never happened, they must be understood as a general homily to a people "in a state of disorientation." The dispensational approach, Allen believes, is a "desperate expedient." However, the language of the Old Testament, including that of Ezekiel, requires a future for Israel that Allen apparently cannot accept.

His comments on the text are forceful and explicit. Applying the message to modern audiences comes easily after reading this commentary.

Homer Heater

Exploring the Book of Daniel. By John Phillips and Jerry Vines. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1990. 279 pp., plus outline. \$16.95.

This joint exposition of the Book of Daniel by John Phillips and Jerry Vines merits a prominent place in the libraries of those interested in Bible exposition. Vines is the well-known pastor of the large First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida and served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1988 to 1990. John Phillips is a full-time member of the Moody Bible Institute's Extension Department and has had an extensive career of Bible conference ministry. Both are reliable, conservative interpreters of Scripture.

This exposition recognizes fully the inerrancy of the Bible and interprets it from the premillennial point of view, which honors the Book of Daniel as genuine prophecy written by Daniel in the 6th century B.C. Most