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Resource Reviews

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The Christian Librarian **TCL** R E V I E W S

1 and 2 Samuel. New International Biblical Commentary. Old Testament Series 6, by Mary J. Evans. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000. 267 pp. ISBN: 1-56563-579-5.

Reviewed by Francisco Arriola, Bolin Library for Pentecostal Research, Southeastern College, Lakeland, FL.

The NIBC is a commentary series dedicated to combining a firm commitment to modern scholarship with a similar commitment to the Bible's full authority for Christians. This effort by Evans fulfills that commitment. 1 and 2 Samuel is correctly treated as one book that needs to be read in the wider context of the preceding and following historical books. The introduction deals with the expected issues such as the authorship, text and sources. Evans also discusses four important interests of the writers that are touched upon in the commentary: the political realities during this period in Israel's history, the importance of the characters in the story, the theology that is expressed through the stories and the theme of power and weakness as expressed in the lives of the characters and political institutions. The commentary, based on the NIV, is straightforward and insightful, avoiding technical jargon. It is appropriately organized according to literary units rather than verse-by-verse. There are additional notes at the end of each section that address any critical or grammatical issues. There is a bibliography of commentaries and other studies, as well as a subject and scripture index. Written to be accessible to a general readership, this commentary is recommended for all levels of readers.

Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia, Aron Dotan. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001. \$49.95 ISBN 1-56563-089-0

Reviewed by John Jaeger, Reference Services Librarian, Union University, Jackson, TN

The recent publication of the *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* marks a significant event in biblical scholarship. This work is a new and carefully rendered edition of the Leningrad Codex, which is the oldest

complete text of the Hebrew Bible in existence. While other editions of the codex have been made in previous decades, this new work, done under the careful editorship of Aron Doton (Professor Emeritus of Tel Aviv University, Head of the Cymbalista Jewish Heritage Center in Tel Aviv, President since 1992 of the International Organization for Masoretic Studies) is a thorough revision of those earlier works.

Doton's approach is to provide a thoroughly accurate rendering of the Codex Leningrad text, yet he also is willing to correct that text in places where there are definite errors. A sixteen page forward to the work provides the editor's methodology and approach in good detail. As Doton discusses this edition in comparison with the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), one noticeable difference is that the former contains no critical apparatus of any kind. At the same time, the BHL does have five helpful appendices. Appendix A provides a list of all the readings where BHL does not follow the Codex Leningrad. Appendix B lists the Petuhot and Setumot (open and closed sections) from the Torah and Esther as they are found in the manuscript. Appendix C displays the shape of the Song of the Sea and the Song of Moses, while Appendix D addresses the Tiberian vocalization deviations. Finally, Appendix E lists scripture readings for weekly Sabbaths, special Sabbaths, holidays, fast days, and special torah readings.

The *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* accomplishes exactly what the editor set out to do—it serves as a tool useful for scholars, teachers and also students. While those looking for a Hebrew text containing critical apparatus, such as is necessary in college or seminary coursework on the Hebrew language, will need to turn to the BHS, this less costly and less bulky (16 x 21 cm.) version will be appealing for most others. Colleges and seminaries will want this edition not only for those patrons, but also for the scholars doing careful comparisons of the translations from the Masoretic texts. There are in fact 5,000 differences in accent marks between BHS and BHL, and that kind of careful research detail, based on scholarly

translation efforts makes this work a treasure for language specialists in Hebrew studies. Recommended for all libraries.

Making Sense of Paul: A Basic Introduction of Pauline Theology, by Virginia Wiles. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999. 160 pp. ISBN 1-56563-117-X

Reviewed by Francisco Arriola, Bolin Library for Pentecostal Research, Southeastern College, Lakeland, FL

The purpose of this book is to introduce readers to the thought and theology of the Apostle Paul. It is a book written for students, both college and seminary, and adult lay persons who seek to understand the meaning of Paul's message for today. Wiles identifies a number of primary obstacles to understanding Paul's message: his unsystematic thought, his rhetorical form of writing, our distance from Paul's world, the gap in our understanding Paul's terminology, and the experiential dimension in Paul's thought. In three well-written and concise sections and with the use of modern analogies, Wiles seeks to overcome these obstacles. For example, when discussing the concept of the covenant, Wiles employs the analogy of marriage compared to living together to illustrate the commitment and deeper aspects of God's covenant with his people. The hopelessness brought about by the sinfulness of humanity is aptly illustrated by the modern day analogy of people involved in drug use, unable to liberate them from the power of the addiction.

The first section of the book addresses Paul's Jewish background and thought, the righteousness of God and the meaning of the Law for the Jewish people. The second section addresses the Greco-Roman milieu and its influence on Paul's thought in regard to the relations between Jew and Gentile. Topics covered in this section are Paul among the Gentiles, sin, and slavery and death. The final section addresses Paul's creative contribution in light of his experience in Christ. Topics covered here are Paul as the apostle of Jesus Christ, justification by grace, Spirit and community, and faith and hope. Each section contains a summary and review of the main topics. There are helpful

illustrations throughout the book, a suggested reading list, a glossary of terms, and index. This book is highly recommended for all users.

Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul, by J. P. Moreland. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997. 249 pp. \$14.00. ISBN 1576830160.

Reviewed by Scott Lloyd, Information Services Specialist, Cincinnati Bible College & Seminary, Cincinnati, OH.

Many contemporary evangelical Christians have lost their "saltiness," according to J. P. Moreland's analysis. One of the reasons why this has happened is a growing anti-intellectualism in many evangelical churches. Many churches do little or nothing to foster the intellectual development of their members. In light of this situation, Moreland seeks to convince contemporary Christians that one's mind plays an important role in one's Christian faith.

To the task, Moreland brings his experience as a Christian philosopher and apologist (he is professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University). He also brings his years of experience in local church ministry. This is important because Moreland wants to communicate to his readers that the book has practical value to their Christian walk, lest they think that a book on the role of reason in Christianity would not be.

Throughout the book, Moreland seeks to expose the reasons why contemporary evangelical Christians neglect their intellectual development. Christians spend too much time entertaining themselves, especially with T.V. (90-91). They do not spend enough time reading, and what they do read is not challenging (93). As Moreland exposes both the reasons for and the symptoms of the decline of the Christian intellect, his book sounds very similar to other attempts at exposing this problem (i.e., David Wells' *The Death of Truth* and Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*).

However, Moreland is not content to simply cast stones. He also wants to offer advice that will help the average Christian (and the average church) rediscover the role of reason in his or her Christian life. He helps the reader understand the importance of developing critical thinking skills. He explains to the reader why the role of reason is important in apologetics, evangelism, and

even corporate and individual worship. While one might not agree with all of the author's suggestions, or find all of them helpful, nevertheless most readers will find something of value here as they seek to love God with their minds.

On the whole, the book succeeds in making its case—which the role of the intellect is often neglected in spiritual formation, and that Christians must take action before we lose all credibility with the culture we are seeking to engage. Since the book is written on a popular level, it would be a useful addition to both public and academic libraries. It might also serve as a supplementary textbook in an undergraduate class.

The Letter to the Ephesians. Pillar New Testament Commentary, by Peter T. O'Brien. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, Leicester: Apollos, 1999. 536 pp. ISBN: 0-8028-3736-0

Reviewed by Francisco Arriola, Bolin Library for Pentecostal Research, Southeastern College, Lakeland, FL

O'Brien is well qualified to write this commentary having authored numerous books and articles on the Pauline epistles, most notably the commentaries on Colossians (WBC-1983) and Philippians (NIGTC-1991). The introduction addresses the standard issues of the epistle's authorship, theological emphases, destination, purpose, central message, and literary genre. O'Brien defends Pauline authorship of the epistle against those arguments that view the theological emphases of the letter as a telling criticism against the apostle's authorship. Rather than viewing the "cosmic Christology", emphasis on salvation versus justification, the supposedly "high ecclesiology", and realized eschatology as evidence against Pauline authorship, O'Brien concludes it is more reasonable to think of Paul "as re-expressing, developing and modifying his own thoughts for a different readership facing a different set of circumstances." The purpose of the letter is seen as urging readers to bring their lives to conformity with the cosmic reconciliation effected by Christ. This ties in with the central message of the letter, which is "cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ." O'Brien treats 1:3-3:21 as doctrinal, which he entitles "New Humanity: A Divine Creation." The second half of the epistle, 4:1-6:20, is seen as the exhortation, which O'Brien calls the

"New Humanity in Earthly Life." The verse-by-verse commentary critically engages important scholarship on Ephesians. There is an excellent bibliography, and a subject, author, scripture and extra biblical index. Recommended for advanced college and seminary students.

The Many Faces of Faith: A Guide to World Religions and Christian Traditions, Richard R. Losch. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. 192 pp. \$19.00 ISBN 0-8028-3910-X

Reviewed by John Jaeger, Reference Services Librarian, Union University, Jackson, TN

Losch's work is perhaps unique among all the reference works available in the field of religion—a book that covers all the major religions and all the major denominations within Christianity within the space of less than two hundred pages. The first portion of the book focuses on those religious groups outside of mainstream Christianity, dealing not only with traditional world religions such as Buddhism and Judaism but also with also with sectarian and fringe movements such as Mormonism and Neopaganism. The second portion turns specifically to Christianity, and here fifteen different denominational groups are discussed.

Losch himself, in the preface, notes that he does not intend this to be a "scholarly" or "in-depth work" but intends "to familiarize the reader with the main customs and beliefs of the different groups..." (p. viii) The question, however, is whether one can even provide an adequate and substantial understanding of the customs and beliefs with the entries on many of the specific religions or denominations groups running only 3-4 pages in length.

Having noted this, Losch actually does contribute something unique and interesting in putting together this handy, single volume; it may not serve as a thorough reference resource but it does have some helpful information both on world religions and Christian denominations. At its reasonable price, some academic libraries may want to consider purchasing it for their general collections. Those looking to fortify their reference collections in these areas will need to look to other resources, such as the *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (11th ed, revised, Abington Pr., 2001), *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford Press, 1997), and the *Atlas of the World Religions* (Oxford Press, 1999). *