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Telfer's "Wrestling with Isaiah: The exegetical methodology of Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722)" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Telfer, C. K. (2016) *Wrestling with Isaiah: The exegetical methodology of Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722)*. Reformed Historical Theology, vol. 38. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 292 pp. \$107.00. ISBN 9783525551028

This work introduces the reader to Campegius Vitringa, a renowned scholar of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. After a short introduction to the book's rationale, Telfer provides first a concise biography of Vitringa, which will introduce the reader to a somewhat unfamiliar biblical commentator, and second a broad review of literature since the mid-nineteenth century that discusses how others have understood Vitringa's interpretative contribution and methodology. Telfer then uses a section of Vitringa's exegesis of Isaiah in his *Commentarius* to show how his exegetical *praxis* compares to what he says about methodology. Thus, chapter 4 summarizes from his own writings what he has to say about reading Scripture. Chapter 5 demonstrates from the *Commentarius* his focus on literal interpretation, as "context is the main court of appeal for Vitringa for justifying any particular reading" (150). Then, chapter 6 shows his concern for spiritual interpretation, in which is not meant allegory, but rather a concern by Vitringa to wrestle with Isaiah in view of the whole whereby he "expands this hermeneutical search to include the entire Christian canon" (205). The final chapter brings together Telfer's observations about Vitringa's contribution to the field of biblical studies in its post-critical setting.

Given that Vitringa's massive, 2-volume commentary on Isaiah has yet to be translated from Latin into English, sources such as Telfer's makes an important contribution for students who may not have access to such an important, pre-critical text. Vitringa's contribution to the field of Old Testament studies has only recently been appreciated by a wider audience, thanks to the impact of such OT scholars as Brevard Childs. This volume will make an invaluable addition to a library's holdings by introducing its patrons to Vitringa's biblical interpretation generally and the Book of Isaiah specifically. The volume will also contribute to the library's holdings from reformed theologians.

Reviewer

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