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Provan's "Seeking what is right: The Old Testament and the good life" (book review)

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Book Review



Provan, I. (2020). *Seeking what is right: The Old Testament and the good life*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. 500 pp. \$49.99. ISBN 9781481312882

Should Christians place the same importance on the Old Testament as that placed on the New Testament? That is the question Iain Provan addresses in *Seeking What is Right: The Old Testament and the Good Life*. Second to this, Provan uses Old Testament and New Testament scripture to discuss what is right.

Provan is the Marshall Sheppard Professor of Biblical Studies at Regent College and the author of several other books including *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture*, *Dark Green Religion*, and *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why it Matters*. His experience and expertise in reading and commenting on the Old Testament provide an excellent background for the information provided in this book. *Seeking What is Right* is divided into three parts with the majority of the text being in Part 2.

Part 1 introduces the idea of the good life. Provan defines the good life before moving into his evaluation of using the whole Bible rather than only the New Testament (25% of the Bible) to determine what the good life looks like. Finally, before moving to Part 2, Provan sets the stage for the story of the Bible. He states his premise that Bible reading must be done in context of the entire story. With this idea, Provan addresses Christian history and the ethical challenges or shortcomings facing Christians today.

Part 2 begins with Constantine and then moves through the Crusades, Reformation, Revolution in England, pilgrims in the New World, slavery, types of governments, women's rights, the Israel Palestine debate, and environmentalism (green movements). Although Provan gives some background to these historical events, readers would benefit from having some background knowledge of European history as it relates to Christianity and politics. The breadth of coverage requires Provan to quickly dive deep into each topic without giving a novice reader adequate background information. Each chapter includes an overview of the historical event and the ethical dilemma involved with the event or time. Provan then moves to the hermeneutics using both New and Old Testament scriptures to support his views. Having a Bible nearby to read Scriptures referenced would be helpful for reading using the book for research.

Lastly in Part 3, Provan addresses more current ethical dilemmas facing Christians today including abortion, transgenderism, and sexual attraction. How should Christians respond to these situations and the disciplines of exiles (which he describes Christians to be) are also addressed in the final chapters.

Seeking What is Right includes an appendix with additional sources of information related to current ethical dilemmas, an extensive bibliography, and author and Scripture indices. University libraries with courses in Christian ethics or Old Testament studies would benefit from including *Seeking What is Right* in their collection.

Reviewer

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