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Cox's "How to Read the Bible" (Book Review)

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How to Read the Bible,

by Harvey Cox. New York: HarperOne, 2015. 257 pp. \$26.99.

ISBN 9780062343154

Reviewed by Paul B. Drake, Library Director, Pacific Islands University, Mangilao, Guam

Harvard Divinity School professor Harvey Cox presents ways to reconcile the two most often separated approaches to studying the Bible – modern historical and literary. It is his thesis that these approaches enhance and deepens the study that opens up a “rich, diverse, and contemporary version of Scripture.” It is Cox’s hope that the book would “construct a bridge between ‘Bible study’ and ‘biblical studies’ in the light of a ‘spiritual’ approach to the Bible (p. 14). *How to Read the Bible* is not intended to be a scholarly work as it aims to bring hermeneutics to a wider audience.

Nine of the ten chapters discuss a Bible book and the historical research that each illustrates:

Genesis – source analysis

Exodus – archaeology augmenting understanding

Joshua – narrative theory

Job – literary theory

The Prophets – form analysis

The Gospels – redaction history and translation study

Paul’s Letters – empire studies

Revelation – history of canonization and history of use

Each chapter analyzes issues in the book in light of the particular research method. The chapter on *Job* looks at translation and plot as well as looking at the perspective of sufferers. The chapter on Paul’s letters looks at Paul’s world and his work to bridge the Gospel from the Jewish culture to the Hellenistic culture and the subsequent clashes on worldview. Throughout each chapter “study tips” are provided, many of which refer to complimentary books and studies.

Cox encourages the reader to not do biblical studies by oneself, but to participate in Bible studies as part of a group. *How to Read the Bible* is not a step-by-step method to study the Bible, but rather an introduction of a number of biblical criticisms methods.