

*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2: *Numbers to Ruth*. Edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012, 1348 pp., \$49.99.

This volume represents the last of thirteen volumes to be published in the revised *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (2006–12). The set's new editors, Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, replace their deceased predecessor, Frank E. Gæbelein. The purpose, audience, and theological tenor replicate the former series (p. 7).

Ronald B. Allen, senior professor of Bible exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, updates his commentary on Numbers (pp. 23–456) from the original 1990 edition. Of the other four original contributors, three have died—Kalland, Madvig, and Wolf. “Deuteronomy” (pp. 457–814) by Michael A. Grisanti of The Master's Seminary replaces Kalland's commentary. Hélène M. Dallaire's “Joshua” (pp. 815–1042) supersedes the exposition by Madvig. Dallaire, an ordained minister with the Evangelical Church Alliance, serves as an associate professor of OT at Denver Seminary. She contributed to *A Case for Historic Premillennialism* (Baker, 2009). Mark J. Boda, professor of OT at McMaster Divinity College, contributes “Judges” (pp. 1043–1288), supplanting Wolf's work. In place of Huey's commentary, George M. Schwab offers “Ruth” (pp. 1289–1348). Schwab serves as an associate professor of OT at Erskine Theological Seminary.

From the older edition, Allen (p. 163) changes his view on who killed the firstborns in Egypt from an angel of death to Yahweh himself (Num 8:17). He removes sixteen bibliographic references and adds thirteen. Fifty footnotes increase to 103 in his Introduction. The new edition retains the primitive map (p. 412) and pictorial diagram (p. 101).

Allen's mantra for Numbers—“God has time; the wilderness has sand”—expresses Yahweh's patience for an obedient generation (p. 26). His commentary emphasizes God's grace amidst Israel's repeated rebellions (e.g. p. 227) and worship (“the pulse of the book is worship,” p. 26). The Priestly covenant (Num 25:10–13) rivals the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants in significance, and serves as a “pivotal section in the theology of the Torah” (p. 346). An unredeemed Balaam (pp. 306–7) predicts the “star” and “scepter” (Num 24:17), namely, God's Son (pp. 330–33).

Allen (p. 218) regards the gigantic stature of the Nephilim as hyperbole since the “real” Nephilim (of partly demonic descent) permanently perished in the flood (cf. Gen 6:1–4; Num 13:33). Concerning Num 12:1–3, Allen believes Moses divorced Zipporah, and the pressures of leadership made him the most “miserable” person on earth (pp. 199–202). With implications for the Abrahamic covenant, he identifies “the River of Egypt” (Num 34:5) as Wadi el-'Arish (p. 437) instead of the Nile's Pelusian branch (H. Bar-Deroma, “The River of Egypt (Nahal Mizraim),” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 92 [January-June 1960] 37–56).

Deuteronomy, for Grisanti, consists of a “sermonic exposition rather than legislation” (p. 459). The book's literary structure resembles bilateral Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties (pp. 462–63). Grisanti avoids an exclusively messianic fulfillment of Deut 18:15–18 (p. 654; cf. Acts 3:13–24, esp. v. 22). Overall, his work represents

a top commentary on Deuteronomy, and a valuable complement to Merrill's *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Nashville: B&H, 1994).

Grisanti chooses not to elucidate Deuteronomy's eschatological ramifications. Allen expects an earthly future for Israel, but not for gentile nations such as Edom (pp. 331–32, 439). Dallaire avows that the Israelites will inherit their land in the eschaton (pp. 837, 954), despite her suggestion that Israel's land boundaries in Josh 1:4 could convey exaggeration (p. 855).

Without seeking naturalistic explanations, Dallaire accepts Joshua's miracles, such as the collapse of Jericho's walls (p. 896) and the sun standing still (p. 932). Holy war constituted worship (p. 845). Dallaire's series of charts summarize facts about each town or region allotted to the Israelites (pp. 957–1020). Her outline subordinates Joshua 22–24 under a point that only claims to encompass chapters 13–21 (pp. 850–51, 1022). Some readers will find her Wikipedia citations out of place in an academic commentary (p. 900). Dallaire (p. 956) and Boda (p. 1204) surmise that the Philistines entered Canaan in the twelfth century BC, and according to Dallaire, their mention in the Torah constitutes anachronisms.

As Boda points out, predominant themes in Judges include kingship and assimilation (p. 1056). Judah's preeminence foreshadows a distant deliverer: "The book as a whole points to a figure from Judah" (p. 1088). Boda rightly concludes that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter, but he disregards the crux's alternative solutions (p. 1196).

Schwab's outline of Ruth consists of a subjective seven-level literary chiasm with a single central segment: 2:18–23 (p. 1309). In his thinking, immorality pervades the Ruth-Boaz encounter in chapter 3 (pp. 1332–38).

As to authorship, Moses wrote most of Numbers, Allen declares, but writers as late as Solomon's time added sections like 12:3, 15:32–36, 18:21–24, and chapters 22–25 (pp. 39–40, 269–70). According to Grisanti (pp. 461, 811), Moses authored Deuteronomy with the exception of chapter 34 and possible other portions (2:10–11, 20–23; 3:9, 11, 13b–14; 10:6–9). To account for these exceptions, Grisanti appeals to inspired textual updating (pp. 461 n. 12, 466, 500, 512, 812) as he does in his co-authored OT introduction, *The World and the Word* (Nashville: B&H, 2011, pp. 83 n. 18, 85 n. 23, 92, 167 n. 31). For Dallaire, the canonical text of Joshua "reflects a compilation of sources rather than a single piece of literature written by a single author" (p. 820). The editing finally ceased during the monarchical period (p. 831). Boda theorizes that the events in Judges likely pre-date Samuel (p. 1051), and a much later anonymous narrator composed the book (p. 1048). In Schwab's estimation, the book of Ruth as a composition continued evolving until "the final artistic polishing of the postexilic scribes" (p. 1292).

Regarding the exodus, Allen and Grisanti advocate the c. 1446 BC date (pp. 84, 461), Dallaire espouses c. 1260 BC (pp. 827–28), and Boda cannot decide (p. 1051). Dallaire identifies Ai as Beth Aven (p. 900) or possibly et-Tell (p. 949) rather than Khirbet el-Maqatir, as proposed by Bryant Wood and the Associates for Biblical Research. The latter identification supports the older date of the exodus. Allen speculates that the Israelites crossed the Aqaba Gulf on dry ground (pp. 230, 295,

429). In the map of the exodus route (p. 475), however, the Israelites never cross a body of water, contrary to the biblical account.

Many large numbers—such as those in the census lists (Numbers 1, 26)—are exaggerated by a factor of ten, in Allen’s opinion (p. 65). Similarly, the non-literal use of numbers normally suits Dallaire (e.g. pp. 859, 886) and Boda (e.g. pp. 1115, 1162).

On the topic of typology, Allen identifies the following as biblical types: Phinehas (p. 51), the tabernacle items (p. 122), the bronze snake (p. 296), and the high priests (p. 451). For him, even hyperbolic numbers prophetically symbolize future numbers (p. 68). According to Schwab, Boaz typifies Jesus (pp. 1303, 1342).

Attention to literary devices enhances the volume. For instance, the onomatopoeia *מְדַהְרֹת דְּהָרֹת* (“galloping, galloping”) sounds out the horses’ gallop (p. 1133, Judg 5:22). The polysemantic pun *תִּקְוָה* (“cord/hope,” 872) in Josh 2:21 simulates the pun in Job 7:6.

As for editorial (scribal) blunders, *דְּעוּאָל* should read *רְעוּאָל* concerning the MT of Num 2:14 (p. 97) like it does in the previous edition (p. 715). In the electronic version *סוּף* should appear as *סוּף* as it does in the hard copy (p. 429).

Whereas Dallaire and Schwab appear to follow the MT throughout, the other writers sometimes accept material variants. Examples include Allen in Num 25:6 (pp. 342, 245) and 32:17 (p. 418), Grisanti in Deut 32:8 (p. 785), 32:43 (pp. 795–96), and 33:2 (p. 800), and Boda in Judg 5:14 (pp. 1131). Allen, Grisanti, and Schwab maintain the majority (but debatable) view of the *Qere*—that it preserves corrections (pp. 202, 735, 1298) rather than errors (Gordis, *The Biblical Text in the Making* [New York: KTAV Publishing, 1971]).

The weakest bibliography in the volume belongs to Schwab because he excludes excellent textual critical analyses such as de Waard’s “Ruth” in the *BHQ* fascicle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004) and Brotzman’s “Textual Commentary on the Book of Ruth” in his *OT Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) as well as top commentaries such as Block’s *Judges, Ruth* (NAC; Nashville: B&H, 1999), Bush’s *Ruth, Esther* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1996), Huey’s “Ruth” (EBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Joüon’s *Ruth* (2d ed.; Subsidia Biblica; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1986), Morris’s “Ruth” in *Judges and Ruth* by Cundall and Morris (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1968), and Wood’s *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975). The Joshua, Judges, and Ruth bibliographies each omit Davis’s *Conquest and Crisis* (3d ed.; Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2008). Dallaire’s Joshua bibliography provides only fifteen entries whereas Boda’s Judges bibliography lists ninety-nine. One wonders how publisher specifications affected these decisions.

Three of the book's commentaries are already dated at the time of publication. Allen only cites sources up to 2005 (p. 147), Grisanti up to 2004 (p. 466), and Schwab up to 2006 (p. 1305). More current sources appear in the discourses by Dallaire (2012, p. 838 n. 88) and Boda (2010, p. 1059). To my knowledge, the disparity in dates reflects a delay in the book's publication. At least in Grisanti's case, the publisher did not allow him to update his print-ready work during the delay. Nevertheless, clergy and laypersons alike can benefit from this volume.

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*Reading the Historical Books: A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text.* By Patricia Dutcher-Wells. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014, xxi + 178 pp., \$21.99 paper.

Engagement is important at Baker Publishing Group. A search of their website ([www.bakerpublishinggroup.com](http://www.bakerpublishinggroup.com)) revealed thirty-five titles that include the word "engaging," either in the title itself or as part of a larger series, such as *Engaging Worship* or *Engaging Culture*. The title under consideration here, *Reading the Historical Books*, is subtitled *A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text*.

In this volume, Patricia Dutcher-Wells approaches engagement by addressing two very important questions: "How do we read the historical books in the Old Testament well?" and "What do we need to know about this part of Scripture in order to appreciate the beauty and meanings of the text?" (p. xv). She does so in five well-conceived chapters: (1) "Discovering the Context of the Text"; (2) "Listening to the Story in the Text"; (3) "Discerning the Interests of the Text"; (4) "Examining History in the Text"; and (5) "Examining the Shape of History in the Text." The author concludes with a section entitled "Toward a Definition of Biblical Historiography."

Dutcher-Wells has done a great service for those who have the privilege to teach the historical books of the Bible. Her writing is clear and straightforward, her examples are illuminating, and she seems to write as if she is thinking along with a first-year student who has the temerity to take a class called "Old Testament Historical Books," but is not exactly sure why she is taking it. I can easily imagine many undergraduate Bible professors using this book as a course text—either in a "Historical Books" class or in a general hermeneutics class that covers the various genres of the Bible. With helpful charts, discussion questions at the end of each chapter, and "Questions for Careful Readers" side-barred throughout, the book is definitely reader-friendly.

*Reading the Historical Books* follows in the line of books on biblical narrative that became prevalent after the publication of Robert Alter's *Art of Biblical Narrative*. Readers who have not approached the biblical text in this way are sure to enjoy Dutcher-Wells's discussions of character development, conflict within the narrative, dialogue, and setting, just to name a few areas covered. It strikes me that she has taught a generation of students to read the text well.