

discerned with the aid of all the other tools of literary studies” (p. 78). One hopes her fine work will be integrated into a full-orbed literary approach so as to deepen our understanding of Hebrew texts.

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*Abraham: The Story of a Life.* By Joseph Blenkinsopp. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015, xv + 240 pp., \$29.00 paper.

Joseph Blenkinsopp contributes a critical commentary on the Abraham saga of Genesis 11–25. Blenkinsopp serves as the John A. O’Brien Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at the University of Notre Dame. Recently he published *David Remembered: Kingship and National Identity in Ancient Israel* (Eerdmans, 2013).

The book’s introduction situates the figure Abraham within the biblical and extrabiblical context. The author argues that the tenfold *toledot* structure of Genesis divides nicely into two groups of five, and both groups emphasize their middle segment: the Noah story of 6:9–9:29, and the Isaac story of 25:19–35:29 (pp. 15–17). Thereafter, the volume’s ten chapters provide a flowing, discursive explanation of the Abraham sequence. Each chapter, with the exception of chapter 7, concludes with a section titled “Filling the Gaps,” which explores the ancient opinions of Abraham by Islamic, Jewish, and Christian sources. The back matter includes a ten-page epilogue (“Descent from Abraham in Early Christianity and What It Might Mean for the Christian Today”) and a full set of indexes. The book does not discuss the timing of Abraham’s spiritual conversion.

The commentator discerns that “a strong sense of providence ... pervades the Abraham cycle from beginning to end” (p. 187). On point, he recognizes that the story of Abraham “moves toward its terminus by way of the successive removal of obstacles to the fulfillment of commitments made to Abraham in Harran” (p. 64).

The author holds a form of the documentary hypothesis. He maintains that “the story of Abraham reached its final form by a process of incremental expansion and updating covering a significant period of time” (p. 56). Often he deems a textual unit of Genesis as a “composite” (p. 53), a “later addition” (p. 74), a “work of bricolage” (p. 49), or the like. The patriarchs did not know the name Yahweh (p. 83 n. 8). In 16:13 and 21:33, Hagar and Abraham spoke to (or called upon) a “local numen” rather than Yahweh himself (pp. 83–4). Furthermore, the long lifespans of the ancients, such as Abraham’s age of 175, represent “impossibly high figures. At the time in which the story is set, average life expectancy would have been less than, not more than, it is today. These are schematic ages” (p. 37). Later temple scribes invented the Pentateuch’s chronological scheme, he says (p. 176). In addition, how could God command Abraham to sacrifice his son? Whatever the answer, Blenkinsopp assures readers that “what we have before us is not some directly transmitted information about the nature of God” (p. 159).

Myth and legend factor significantly in the author's approach to Scripture at the expense of the text's historicity. According to Blenkinsopp, "The genealogy of Shem, first of Noah's three sons, to Terah, father of Abraham, is the bridge over which we pass from the world of myth to the world of history" (p. 27). He refers to the great flood as "the near extinction of all life on earth, a mythic image of the fifth and last extinction at the end of the Cretaceous period 65 million years ago" (p. 18; cf. p. 106). He speaks of "the folktale prologue of Job 1–2" and believes that "Job is without a doubt a figure from the legendary past" (p. 2). And "the War of the Nine Kings is already manifestly legendary" (p. 62). The writer explains, "Like ethnic myths and legends of origins all over the world, the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is ethnogenesis designed to sustain the identity and destiny of the ethnic group within which it came into existence. And as with the myths and legends of origins of other peoples, questions of historical accuracy are of secondary importance" (p. 166).

Blenkinsopp accepts contradictions in the Bible. For him, the four hundred years and the four hundred thirty years of slavery "both contradict what we are told about the chronology of the life of Moses" (p. 74). Moreover, the circumcision story of Genesis 34 retains multiple "incongruities" (p. 103), and "the biblical sources do not agree on the numbers deported by the Babylonians" (p. 22). Such skepticism asperses the *prima facie* evidence of the biblical witness.

Some sample interpretations catch the eye. Genesis 17, the covenant of circumcision, functions as "the axis or fulcrum of the Abraham cycle" (p. 96; cf. p. 166). Abraham's affinity for Ishmael strikes Blenkinsopp as "one of the most impressive features of the Abraham story" (p. 92). Sarah and Iscah are the same person (pp. 17, 28–9, 43). Pharaoh married Sarah, which strongly suggests that they had sexual relations (p. 48). "Lot disqualifies himself as Abraham's heir by choosing to live in Sodom ... outside of Canaan" (p. 44). Lot's wife did not turn into a column of salt (p. 134). Lot's daughters did nothing wrong when they got their father drunk and had sexual relations with him (p. 136). After the binding of Isaac at Moriah, Abraham and his attendants returned to Beersheba without Isaac (pp. 159, 161). The commentator suggests that the deliverance of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21 and the binding of Isaac in chapter 22 both took place at the same site (pp. 164–65). Abraham died while his servant was away searching for a wife for Isaac (pp. 186, 189). Blenkinsopp locates Bethel at the traditional site of Beitin (pp. 37, 51) rather than el-Bireh, the site proposed by the late archaeologist David Livingston in his multiple articles on the subject.

Sloppiness mars the list of Abbreviations. Namely, the entry for *DDD* should signal the second edition. The editor of *IDBSup* should be "K. Crim" instead of "J. Crim." The entry for *TDOT* should read "15 vols" and "1976–" rather than "8 vols" and "1964–1976," which incidentally is the date range of *TDNT*. The publication date of *TLOT* should be 1997 rather than 1994, which happens to be the date of *TLNT*. Furthermore, no discernable pattern exists concerning the abbreviations of the first names of the editors.

Blenkinsopp writes for a learned audience as evidenced by the inclusion of untranslated French and German words (e.g. pp. 57–8). By reading this commentary, Bible interpreters can see how one critical scholar views the Abraham cycle.

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*Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan.* By Oren R. Martin. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015, 208 pp., \$25.00 paper.

Oren Martin's *Bound for the Promised Land* is a monograph in D. A. Carson's New Studies in Biblical Theology series. The series seeks to address key issues in the field, simultaneously instructing and edifying (p. 9). This particular volume seeks a synthesis of OT and NT, allowing the reader to see the trajectory and larger picture of God's promise of land. Specifically, Martin intends to demonstrate that the land promised to Abraham finds its fulfillment in the new heaven and new earth won by Christ (p. 17). And it succeeds. This book is what it claims to be: a more comprehensive ("whole-Bible biblical theology"), non-spiritualizing, historical-redemptive approach to the land.

The strengths of this book are immediately obvious. First, it is uncluttered with technical jargon and therefore more than accessible to those just being introduced to biblical theology. Indeed, one might argue the best use of this book is for an introductory biblical theology class. Second, it is strongly confessional and evangelical in its presuppositions. Even the most conservative theologian will find little cause for concern. Third, its organization is simple and intuitive. Seven of the ten chapters contain a methodical walk through the different corpora of the Christian canon, and every chapter posits a covenantal, historical-redemptive approach that finds its climax in Jesus. Finally, it does not seek to enter modern practical land discussions; rather, it stays true to the biblical theological land trajectory and lets readers draw their own political or social conclusions.

If I were to summarize my frustrations with the book, they would be the antithesis of what I consider its strengths: it is lacking in technicality, it is too strongly evangelical, it deemphasizes alternative theological grids, and it fails to enter into the modern controversies of the Middle East. While it seems there is no way for Martin to satisfy my criticisms, I elaborate in order that others might get a fuller picture of the book.

First, while the book is uncluttered with technical jargon and therefore immensely more readable for beginners, it is often the more technical and nuanced ideas that keep some of us reading. This volume boasts no new ideas or significant advancements in the field and does little to excite the professional scholar. While exceptions can be found in the first and last chapters and the footnotes, these were few and far between. I feel I missed out on some important hermeneutical nuances that almost certainly appeared in his dissertation version. One example that does show up with some regularity is the distinction between the spiritual and literal sense. With Gentry and Wellum he says that the NT demonstrates both when and