investigation. Ten scholars treat this passage from several points of view. The first part of the book includes perspectives from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. The second part looks at readings from Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard. Next Kafka, Levinas, and Derrida are examined. Finally, a look at how the contemporary reader might view the drama is offered. Each essay demonstrates how the meaning of this biblical story continues to challenge our understanding of God, faith, and family loyalty. The essays are well researched and written. Though intended for a general audience, this book is not meant for the beginning reader.


This is the second volume of a two-volume commentary on the book of Psalms (See the January 2014 number of *The Bible Today* for a review of vol. 1). The series to which it belongs is written with an eye to the average reader rather than serious students of the Bible. As with the first volume, this book seeks to help readers immerse themselves in the religious wealth of the psalms. It provides ways of speaking to God in praise, thanksgiving, trust, or petition. Goldingay leads the readers through a prayerful rather than a literary or historical reading of the respective psalm. He then identifies current issues or concerns that might correspond to something within the psalm.


Hancock’s investigation of the story of Esther sets out to fashion a new paradigm for examining the social phenomenon of gender in the ancient world. Along with issues of power, she sees the gender issue as intertwined with questions of occupation, family identity, and marital partner. This is a study of social history in which the author employs literary and historical sources. While she draws on feminist scholarship, she does not limit her inquiry to standard gender presuppositions or patterns that, she maintains, can obscure significant ancient political realities. She successfully challenges the claim that men always control public space while women are relegated to private space. She also shows that while Esther might not be the rule, she certainly is not the unique exception. This is a very readable and enjoyable book.


Genesis 6 reports that “sons of God” descended from heaven and mated with the daughters of human beings. Over the years this story intrigued both Jewish and Christian imaginations. From it developed the traditions of the “watchers”/ the “fallen angels.” Fourteen essays by as many scholars address this tradition as found particularly in Second Temple and early Christian writings, at a time when mythological and cosmological speculation was widespread. The book begins with essays
that treat origins of the “fallen angels” tradition. It then looks at Second Temple developments, and ends with their reception in works from early Christianity and early Judaism. The book opens up the history of a theme well known but little understood by many believers. The essays may seem difficult because they deal with unfamiliar material. However, the reader’s perseverance will be well rewarded.

Patriarchal, patrilinear societies are interested in the roles played by fathers, mothers, and sons. Daughters are important as possible wives. There seems to be very little interest in women as sisters. Kalmanofsky steps into this lacuna. Her book is divided into three parts. In the first she looks at sister pairs: Rachel and Leah; Michel and Merav; Israel and Judah. In the second, she speaks of incestuous sisters: Lot’s daughters; Sarah; Tamar. In the third, the subject is sisterhoods: daughters of Adam, Moab, the Land, and Israel; daughters of Jerusalem; Ruth and Naomi. She shows that women as sisters were at times significant literary characters and did indeed impact the history of Israel (Rachel and Leah), as did a sense of sisterhood (Ruth and Naomi). This is a book that will interest students of the Bible as well as those reading in the field of gender studies.

“Covenant” is a theme that has occupied both Jewish-Christian dialogue and post-Shoah theology. Letellier traces the many covenants God entered into with human beings, beginning with the story of Noah, through the traditions of Abraham, Moses, and David, including the promise of a new covenant in Jeremiah, and ending with covenant in the New Testament. The first part of the book, “Covenant and the Old Testament,” examines the explicit passages that treat various covenants. The second part, “Covenant and the New Testament,” seeks to show the continuity, modifications, development, and variations of this theme. Besides the standard bibliography following each section, Letellier lists the names of several well known works of art that depict the scenes described in the passages under consideration. While this is a very interesting aspect of the book, unfortunately no representations of the pictures are included. The book is meant for the beginning reader.

Mathews’s examination of the portrait of Moses begins with the writings of two principal sources of Hellenistic Judaism, Philo and Josephus, who see Moses primarily as a divinized royal figure. He then describes how contemporary scholars see him as a prophet, a lawgiver, and a priest, or various combinations of the three. His own analyses of the pertinent texts show that the pentateuchal traditions reinterpreted traditional features of ancient Near Eastern kings—specifically Hammurabi, Esarhaddon, Nabonidus, and Cyrus—in their characterization of