

class. Todd has raised questions that most Christians have wrestled with at some point and has provided answers to them from within a consistent theological framework. He also provides wisdom in how to and how not to use the old covenant laws in contemporary ethical debates. There are certainly places where many will disagree with his understanding of the relationship between Israel and the church and of his position that none of the old covenant laws are directly applicable to the church today. Nevertheless, the value of his work does not depend on one's position regarding these long-standing debates. Todd has provided the church with a wonderful introduction on how to appropriate and engage with this vital portion of Scripture.

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The Historical Writings: Introducing Israel's Historical Literature. By Mark A. Leuchter and David T. Lamb. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016, xx + 585 pp., \$49.00.

While Jewish and Christian scholars have long independently written about Israel's historical writings, Leuchter (Jewish) and Lamb (Christian) make history of their own by their joint contribution on the historical writings. Despite the volume's joint authorship, Leuchter and Lamb write only the short introduction together and presumably the glossary at the back. Otherwise, they divide up the chapters according to the historical books (Lamb: Joshua, Judges, Kings; Leuchter: Samuel, Ezra–Nehemiah, Chronicles). It makes perfect sense to allocate books according to areas of scholarly expertise or preference.

Yet, alternating chapter authors also puts a spotlight on competing styles unless smoothed out by a vigilant editor, as the authors themselves opine (p. 12). Lamb includes numerous humorous parenthetical asides. Jael supplies a blanket for Sisera, and Lamb adds in parenthesis at this point “but apparently no bedtime story” (pp. 128–29). Lamb further displays a literary flair with his phraseology such as when he describes Samson's use of a donkey's jawbone as displaying “MacGyveresque resourcefulness” (p. 150). He freely uses contractions throughout. Lamb's breezy informality contrasts with Leuchter's more traditional scholarly diction.

Writing preferences aside, both authors follow the same organizational format. The structural components of each chapter include the following: (1) General Introduction to book; (2) Literary Concerns; (3) Historical Issues; (4) Theological Themes; (5) Commentary; (6) Bibliography. Conceptual categories bleed together and this contributes to repetitive writing in places. By the time Lamb reaches the commentary section of Judges, he recognizes the need “to avoid repeating observations already made above” (p. 143). However, the repeating cow is already out of the barn. For instance, Lamb reiterates the comparison of Shamgar's slaughter of six hundred Philistines with an ox goad with Samson's massive Philistine retribution with a donkey's jawbone (pp. 110, 136). Leuchter offers a more economical

approach, but both authors would have benefitted from a more streamlined set of headings within each chapter.

Aside from the usual front and back materials, the volume includes a wide array of elements designed with a college-level audience in mind. It peppers its pages with an impressive number of 81 figures and maps, 85 sidebars, 30 tables, and 178 glossary entries. The figures, maps, and tables all key extremely well to the discussion and will appeal to visual learners. The figures and maps largely derive from Wikimedia Commons (commons.wikimedia.org) and many of these all-black-and-white images lack ideal resolution, though obviously color glossies would be cost prohibitive. The sidebars, too, find ideal placement in the discussion and aid as thoughtful follow-ups to the subjects introduced. As with any glossary, some entries need more explanation than others. Readers could do without fairly well-known vocabulary words like “Agrarian” or “Evil Spirit.” Also, if a glossary word occurs, some kind of cross-referencing system would better alert the reader to the highlighted word. Still, these additional items represent a relative strength of the volume.

After dealing with textual considerations, Lamb centers largely on controversies and ethical infelicities in the book of Joshua. He thumbnail sketches the standard arguments for early and late dates for the conquest (p. 25) and the standard models for Israel’s emergence in the land without reaching a definitive conclusion (pp. 35–38) due to the “complexity of the archaeological relative to Israel’s emergence” (p. 38). Next, Lamb details the arguments to ameliorate *cherem* but defers to readers “to decide for themselves which arguments are helpful in making sense of one of the most problematic aspects of Scripture” (p. 58). He also views Rahab’s positive portrayal as a prostitute a “shocking legacy” (p. 63) in the narrative. With all of these critical issues, Lamb presents rather than assesses the evidence. Other more contested elements of the narrative Lamb simply leaves hanging. For instance, he references Howard’s five solutions for the sun standing still but surprisingly never lists even one of them. He concludes his treatment of Joshua by detailing the tribal allotments (pp. 76–87) and leader speeches (pp. 88–91). Yet this more standard treatment of the narrative pales in comparison to the heightened attention Lamb devotes to the hot-button aspects in Joshua.

Lamb likewise profiles the shock value of Judges or what he dubs the “Book of Heroes,” set in the “Wild West period of Israel’s history” (p. 93). After detailing some of the darker sensationalism of the narrative, Lamb points to the end effect when he says, “Readers are left to ponder: how did a book like this make it into sacred Scripture?” (p. 94). Lamb acknowledges chronological emphases but argues it tells more of a theological story than history (p. 111). This theological story plays out in a 10-step cycle he outlines in the appendix (pp. 160–61). In brief, this cycle moves from an initial period of sin’s consequences to God’s use of a military hero to deliver Israel into rest for many years until the period of sin returns to restart the cycle. Rhetorically, this cycle functions to demonstrate “that it’s not the land of Israel, the people of Israel, the enemies of Israel, or the judge of Israel, but the God of Israel who controls the destiny of the characters in the narrative” (pp. 106–7).

Leuchter takes up the political pen, an apt instrument for his royal subject matter in Samuel. However, he takes the political intrigue to a whole new level, frequently diving underneath the narrative or even running cross-current to it. He maintains agendas drove the composition of Samuel into a “compendium of vastly different sources stemming from disparate social and religious groups” (p. 168). He singles out 2 Samuel 8 as a prime example that “exaggerated David’s conquests” (p. 177), eventuating in a “paragon fit for theological speculation against which subsequent kings could be judged” (p. 182).

While Leuchter roots Samuel generally in history, he argues “it does not mean that the narratives were ever geared to serve purposes other than apologetic, polemical or propagandistic” (p. 192). This opens a Pandora’s box of historical skepticism over such events as David’s armorless confrontation with Goliath (p. 221), Saul’s killing of the priests at Nob (p. 223), the official version of Nabal’s death (p. 224), Saul’s suicidal death (p. 226), the literalness of Ishbosheth’s name (p. 228), the actual arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem (p. 230), the time of origination of David’s prohibition to build a temple (p. 233–34), the humiliating shaving of David’s diplomats by the Ammonites (p. 237), the Hittite ethnicity of Uriah (p. 238), and the realness of Solomon’s daughter, Tamar (p. 244). Each of these narrative-negations answer to a larger political intrigue backstory advanced by Leuchter. Take the case of the name of Saul’s son, Ishbosheth: Leuchter believes the etymological meaning of “shame” for a birth name rather unlikely and serves instead as a rhetorical final dig at the Saulide line (p. 228).

Lamb’s study of Kings concentrates on the regnal formulas that reappear as a literary trope throughout the narrative. He focuses on the structure leading to each king’s final evaluation as “good” or “bad.” Lamb on a couple of occasions calls Solomon an “evil king/ruler” (pp. 258, 316). Even as the builder of the temple, Solomon is far from an altar boy. Still, Solomon does not deserve Lamb’s censure. For one thing, this moral declaration only first appears after Solomon during the divided monarchy. The narrator, when presenting the last word about Solomon, refers the reader to the Acts of Solomon and actually extols his wisdom rather than any prior misdeeds (1 Kgs 11:41). Aside from Lamb’s emphasis on kings, he devotes a large swath of the discussion (pp. 272–84) to prophetic personages and notes, “One could even argue that despite its title, prophets are the real heroes of the story of Kings” (p. 272).

Just as previously Leuchter framed political backstories around the rise of the Davidic dynasty in Samuel, he again looks at the governing politics during the time in exile described in Ezra–Nehemiah. In fact, he describes how the “*gola* community constitutes the sole heir to the legacy of pre-exilic Israel” (p. 370). Since he treats both books as a single entity, he weighs in on the debate of the proper chronological order before favoring the traditional view that Ezra preceded Nehemiah. Yet Leuchter contends the “privileged nature of *gola*-heritage” (p. 429) as the glue uniting these two works.

Leuchter keeps the final chapter on Chronicles short, in no small part due to its shared content with the earlier material found in Samuel–Kings. He suggests the “growing recognition that imperial fortunes could return” (p. 478) as a possible

impetus to its composition. Additionally, it explains some of its unique trajectories from Samuel–Kings such as the chronicle lists that bring its English name.

When viewed at a whole, Lamb and Leuchter cover a lot of general ground in their treatment of the historical literature. Strengths include user-friendly features, especially the sidebars that yield valuable information while seamlessly integrating with the discussion. Both Lamb and Leuchter introduce the reader especially well to the field of archaeology through a liberal use of pictures. Significant concerns emerge though with their subjection of the biblical text to further verification. Lamb implies that in places the narrative lacks ethical respectability, while Leuchter's mantra "many scholars" or "most scholars" (pp. 167, 168, 170, 179 [2x], 181, 183, 191, 214, 241, 248) begs the question over whether a majority-decides position best settles biblical truth.

Lamb and Leuchter applaud the new "common ground in the academic approach to scripture" (p. 3), treating scholarly consensus as a virtue of the highest order. However, this textual unification goal undercuts the possible mutual benefit derived from Jewish and Christian authors writing together from different trajectories. In fact, without the mention of the theological orientation of the authors in the introduction, the reader would never detect any difference. The indices list only a few scattered references from the NT and the rabbinic texts never appear in the indices at all. A more distinct approach would have leveraged rather than blurred the differing theological perspectives of the authors. Nevertheless, this book admirably fills a great collaborative need for Jews and Christians to work together in studying portions of a shared Bible.

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1 Samuel. By Andrew E. Steinmann. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis: Concordia, 2016, 636 pp., \$54.97.

The latest installment in the Concordia Commentary series is consistent with the overall purpose of the series, which is "to assist pastors, missionaries, and teachers of the Scriptures to convey God's Word with greater clarity, understanding, and faithfulness to the divine intent of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text" (p. xii). An editors' preface (pp. xii–xv) enumerates the characteristics of the commentaries, which are essentially evangelical in nature.

Throughout the volume, at the beginning of the commentary on each text, a date is given for the historical events recorded in that particular narrative. These dates are based on Steinmann's meticulous chronological study, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011). Like all the volumes in the Concordia series, fifteen distinct icons are used in the margins to highlight the following themes: Trinity; Temple, Tabernacle; Incarnation; Passion, Atonement; Death and Resurrection, Theology of the Cross, the Great Reversal; *Christus Victor*; Christology; Baptism; Catechesis, Instruction, Revelation; Lord's Supper; Ministry of Word and Sacrament, Office of the Keys; The Church, Christian Marriage; Wor-