

Reviews

STEVEN FINAMORE AND JOHN WEAVER, EDS. *WISDOM, SCIENCE AND THE SCRIPTURES: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF ERNEST LUCAS*. OXFORD: REGENTS PARK COLLEGE, 2012. xvi + 264 PP. [ISBN 978–1–907600–13–5].

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This book is a labour of love by friends, former colleagues and students of Ernest Lucas on the occasion of his retirement. The collection of essays reflects Lucas' fields of interest as a specialist in OT wisdom literature (Part One: Wisdom in the Bible), as a biochemist with a keen interest in science and apologetics (Part Two: Science and Christian Faith) and as a biblical theologian with a clear Christian faith perspective (Part Three: The Scriptures). Echoing this explicit Christian commitment of Lucas' each contribution is followed by a prayer that reflects something of the thoughts set out in that essay. The final piece connects with Lucas' love of sport; especially cricket (Part Four: ...and Cricket). The majority of contributors are involved in theological education with background in pastoral ministry (mainly Baptist).

The first essay, "Creation in the Psalms" by Gordon Wenham, explores creation theology primarily through an examination of three Psalms (pp. 8, 33, 104) and their connection with their surrounding context (psalms on either side of them). Wenham highlights the Psalms' emphasis on the theme of God's steadfast love and benevolent care for all his creation that is juxtaposed in the Psalter with God's involvement in human history through the vindication of the righteous and the divine guidance and forgiveness of the penitent sinner. Although this essay uses some Hebrew it is all transliterated and words are given an English equivalent, so the discussion is accessible to the non-specialist and illuminating in the way it highlights the connections between creation and salvation history.

The second piece by John Bimson, "Fierce Beasts and Free Processes: a Proposed Reading of God's Speeches in the Book of Job" is a provocative and thoughtful essay. It explores the second divine speech at the end of Job and argues that through the mythological creatures of Behemoth and Leviathan who personify primordial chaos, the speech challenges Job to make space in his thinking for chaos as part of God's creation. He argues that this perspective, though unique in the Old Testament, does provide a kind of theodicy to Job's question even though it gives no answer to Job's personal suffering. Bimson finds parallels in this interpretation with the free-process defence of scientist-theologians that maintain that a certain amount of chaos, randomness and chance are built into natural processes.

This part of the book concludes with two essays on aspects of Proverbs. Hillary Nyika in "The Traditional Israelite Legal Settings: Social Contexts in Proverbs?" argues for the probable use of proverbs in the judicial processes whether "at the gate" or in the royal court. Knut Heim in "Personified Wisdom in Early Judaism" traces the development of personified wisdom in Prov 8 in Second Temple/Early Jewish

literature in order to shed light on the traditions that early Christians applied and adapted in their understanding of Jesus Christ.

Paul Fiddes' fascinating study of "Ancient and Modern Wisdom: The Intersection of Clinical and Theological Understanding of Health" opens Part Two of the book engaging with questions of theology and science. Fiddes explores how ancient Israelite wisdom may speak into the debate in the medical field between evidence-based medicine and the wisdom represented in the clinical judgment of a medical practitioner. He argues that these two echo the two aspects of ancient Israelite wisdom: observation evidenced in the collection of wisdom sayings and an attitude of being attuned to Lady Wisdom's guidance through life. Moreover, these two should not be pitted against each other as object and subject but are to be seen as two aspects of the same reality, which are connected by participation. In the contemporary example, doctors need to engage, dialogue and empathise with their patients to make wise decisions using their accumulated experience and the information obtained. This is a relational understanding of how wise decisions come about that is modelled on a Trinitarian perspective of constant engagement within the triune God. Fiddes suggests further that this triune God also makes room for creation to participate in the divine life so that when the creation attunes itself to "the rhythm of life," it will be in line with divine wisdom. This is a demanding read, but well worth engaging with for its insights and thoughtful exposition.

Brian Haymes in "The Way of Practical Modesty" compares epistemology in science and theology particularly against the claims of the New Atheists that religious belief is irrational and delusional.

Two essays follow on climate change. Elaine Storkey's "The Environment and the Developing World" examines the present situation of climate change and the humanitarian crisis of the developing world as well as some responses made to these and calls Christians to acknowledge human responsibility of stewardship over the world that God created. John Weaver's "Hopeful Disciples in a Time of Climate Change" focuses more specifically on Christian responses necessary in light of biblical texts from both testaments.

Finally, this second part closes with Robert White's "Take Ten: Scientists and Their Religious Beliefs" in which he examines the religious beliefs of ten scientists from 350 years chosen by the Royal Society (UK) for their major impact on science and commemorated by a set of stamps. He finds that the percentage of these ten with religious beliefs, spiritual ones and with a secularist stance correspond closely to a recent survey of scientists at leading US universities. White argues that most scientists do not see science and religion in conflict and many explicitly claim that the two cohere. While I agree with his conclusion, his methodology for arriving there is not entirely convincing (e.g. unequal proportions of ten scientists from three and a half centuries compared to a couple of thousand from our era; the need for defining terms like spiritual beliefs compared to religious ones, etc.).

Part Three opens with Simon Woodman's "The Evolving Agenda of Biblical Studies," which follows the developments in the recent history of interpretation from the emphasis on "the original context" of historical criticism through Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* (history of effects/influence) to

reception history and reader-response theory. He suggests that the work of Lucas, as biblical scholar, scientist and practising Christian, resonates with an emerging methodology that allows the text's original context to impact interpretation even as the reader engages with it from a contemporary context. This essay sets up the third part of the book well in its focus on the integration of perspectives and contexts from which readers do interpretation.

Mike Pears' essay "Moving Towards a Theological Perspective on 'Place' by Using Cresswell's Notion of Doxa and Deviance as a Hermeneutical Tool for Place-based Readings of Mark's Gospel" follows next. He argues that place is not simply a backdrop to Mark (and the other gospels) but reflect ideological, hierarchical powers embedded in topography and suggests that Jesus begins the transformation of place by creating new space defined by his presence, which, however, will only be fully established in the eschaton. This essay would greatly benefit from some concrete examples from Mark to anchor the discussion for the non-specialist.

Stephen Finamore's "'Not Made with Hands': the Heavenly Temple in Hebrews and Revelation" explores the meaning of the heavenly/eschatological temple in these books. In the latter the temple represents all of creation and is the goal of creation, while in the former, body typology has a stronger emphasis. In particular, Hebrews seems to draw on Second Temple Jewish ideas echoed also elsewhere in the NT that the temple is symbolic of the human body and both are purified by sacrifice of some sort.

Finally, Robert Ellis' essay "'Play Up! Play Up! And Play the Game!' Cricket and Our Place in the World" concludes the volume with a theological reflection on cricket highlighting principles that can also be applied more broadly to sport in general.

This collection of essays is laudable in its aim of integrating different aspects of Lucas' interests and so in some sense, crossing disciplines to engage with the world and with Scripture. The first two parts cohere particularly well with part three linking with them perhaps more loosely. The volume's strength is this broad spectrum although few will share an interest in or be knowledgeable about all aspects of the book. The depth and expertise required varies among the essays. Some make for easier reading and are accessible to a wider, lay readership while others engage with Hebrew and Greek and/or are more technical and so will primarily be useful for Bible college/seminary students. Overall, this is a rich and interesting volume engaging with a broad range of issues and a worthy tribute to the work of Ernest Lucas.

EDWARD ADAMS, *THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN MEETING PLACES: ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY HOUSES?* LIBRARY OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES 450. LONDON: T & T CLARK, 2013. 263 PP + XIV. [ISBN 978-0-56728-257-6 (HB). 978-0-56715-732-4 (ePDF)].

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