

Sailhamer, John H. *The Pentateuch as Narrative*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992. 700 pp. \$34.99.

*The Pentateuch as Narrative* by John H. Sailhamer is a narrative commentary on the Pentateuch. Other works by Sailhamer include the commentary on Genesis in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* and *The Translation Technique of the Greek Septuagint for the Hebrew Verbs and Participles in Psalms 3-41*.

*The Pentateuch as Narrative* represents an ambitious attempt "to trace the narrative strategy of the Pentateuch" (xix) by analyzing and describing its structure from Genesis to Deuteronomy. Emphasizing the narrative and literary continuity of the complete Pentateuch, the work differs from conventional commentaries, which interpret the Pentateuchal books as discrete entities.

Following a detailed outline of the Pentateuch, the main part of Sailhamer's book begins with an introduction to the narrative interpretation of the Pentateuch. This section deals with topics such as the unity, historical background, authorship, structure, purpose, and theology of the Pentateuch. Following the introduction, five long chapters present detailed analyses of the Pentateuchal books. An appendix summarizes Maimonides' list of laws in the Torah. Following the appendix is a bibliography.

The work is replete with clear diagrams and outlines of structural phenomena, including parallels between passages. The citation of Maimonides' laws at relevant points in the discussion (in addition to the list in the appendix) is interesting, but does not seem particularly relevant to a primary interpretation of biblical texts.

As a working hypothesis, Sailhamer assumes divinely inspired Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a whole, excluding, of course, the account of Moses' death (Deut 34). He recognizes the possibility that the author may have used sources of information, but does not attempt to investigate possible pre-Pentateuchal documents.

Although it is doubtful that a Pentateuchal scholar exists who would not take issue with the author on at least some points, Sailhamer presents an impressive array of relationships between units of text on various hierarchical levels. Connections which he finds between the largest units, namely, the five books of the Pentateuch, are taken to support his argument that the Pentateuch owes its unity to original composition as a single book rather than to late redactional activity. For example: "At three macrostructural junctures in the Pentateuch, the author has spliced a major poetic discourse onto the end of a large unit of narrative (Ge. 49; Nu. 24; Dt. 31). A close look at the material lying between and connecting the narrative and poetic sections reveals the presence of a homogeneous compositional stratum. It is most noticeably marked by the recurrence of the same terminology and narrative motifs" (36).

Sailhamer finds in the overall theology of the Pentateuch a contrast between Abraham, who kept the Law before it was given at Sinai by living a life of faith, and Moses, who failed after the giving the Law because of lack of faith. Thus, he concludes that the Pentateuch's attitude toward the Mosaic Law is essentially the same as that of the prophetic new covenant passages (Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:26).

The chapter on Genesis is especially rich. See, e.g. his comment on Gen 19:27, 28, to the effect that the narrative of Sodom's destruction returns to the perspective of Abraham because he was the central figure in the narrative, due to the fact that his intercession had resulted in Lot's rescue (p. 173).

Chapters on Exodus to Deuteronomy are shorter, partly because these books include extensive blocks of ritual and nonritual laws embedded in the narrative framework which is Sailhamer's primary concern. Rather than engaging in detailed analyses of legal materials, he evaluates the purpose of these materials within the narrative. Particularly interesting is the idea that the lapses of the Israelites, which are described in the narrative, necessitated the giving of more and more laws to regulate their behavior.

It goes without saying that narrative interpretation involves many exegetical decisions. Much of Sailhamer's exegesis is convincing, but I would take issue with a number of points. For example:

1. He interprets Gen 1:1 as a description of God's first act of creation: creation of "the heavens and the earth," rather than a summary of the rest of Gen 1. Since he includes the sun, moon and stars in the expression "the heavens," he regards v. 16 as drawing attention to the significance of what had already been created in v. 1 rather than describing the creation of the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day. Sailhamer has harmonized verses 1 and 16 in a particular direction, only to create a significant problem: What is created on the fourth day? Nothing. So God rested on the fourth day? No, he did not take a day off until the Sabbath (Gen 2:2, 3). Therefore, he must have created something on the fourth day. We are back to square one.
2. On Lev 1:1-6:7, Sailhamer states that "this section lacks any instructions regarding when and under what circumstances the sacrifices were to be offered" (324). This is not true. Lev 1-3 concerns voluntary sacrifices, of which the so-called "peace offering" could be offered for motivations such as thanksgiving or fulfillment of a vow (Lev 7:12, 16). Lev 4-5 deals with sacrifices which were mandatory when certain kinds of sins, e.g., inadvertent violations of divine commands (Lev 4:2, 13, 22, 27), were committed.
3. He places Lev 7:8 under the rubric of the "guilt offering" (328), but the verse concerns the "burnt offering," of which the officiating priest receives the hide.

Sailhamer has challenged scholars to view the Pentateuchal books from a wider perspective. Criticisms of some details by no means neutralize his overall achievement. This valuable work deserves to be read and reread.

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Scherer, James A. and Stephen B. Bevans, eds. *New Directions in Mission & Evangelization: Basic Statements 1974-1991*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992. xx + 324 pp. \$18.95.

*Basic Statements 1974-1991* is the first volume in a major new Orbis publishing project with the general title "New Directions in Mission & Evangelization." Future volumes in this set will offer annotated collections of articles and documents on themes such as theological foundations of mission, evangelism, social responsibility, contextualization of theology, mission spirituality, and theology of religions. It is the intention of the series' editors to collect the best work of Catholic, Orthodox, Ecumenical, Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal. If subsequent volumes are comparable to *Basic Statements*, scholars will be provided with an impressive series of compendia of basic documents and studies on the major contemporary issues of mission.

*Basic Statements* fills a long-felt need for a collection in a single volume of major official statements on mission by church organizations and associations. At the outset Scherer and Bevans give the reader a ten-page introduction to the four sets of documents in the collection—Conciliar Ecumenical, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Evangelical. The introduction is both succinct and complete. It is followed by a select bibliography for the reader who wishes to know more about the documents and the circumstances of their composition.

Materials in the volume are organized into the four major sections listed above. Each document and statement is preceded by an introduction which locates it in time and place and in the development of thought and relationships. The first section is comprised of 12 Conciliar Ecumenical (World Council of Churches) statements, commencing with the 1975 Nairobi statement, "Confessing Christ Today," and ending with the 1991 Canberra statement, "Come Holy Spirit."

In similar fashion, and with the same kinds of introductions and referencing, Part 2 presents 14 Roman Catholic statements. The first is Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation on "Evangelization in the Modern World," 1975; the last is "Dialogue and Proclamation," issued jointly by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in 1991.