

historical sketch and the table of signforms in their standard order and their variations," "the bulk of their work was to be a description of *how the script actually works*—how the sounds of a language are represented in writing, along with a brief text in the language(s) the script is used for." The standard transliteration shown is that "used by scholars, and by governments and libraries," the International Phonetic Alphabet.

The 13 parts are: I, Grammatology; II, Ancient Near Eastern Writing Systems; III, Decipherment; IV, East Asian Writing Systems; V, European Writing Systems; VI, VII, and, VIII, Middle Eastern Writing Systems; IX, X, and XI, Sociolinguistics and Scripts; XII, Secondary Notation Systems; and XIII, Imprinting and Printing. Each part contains an introduction and one or more sections, and each section is comprised of from one to eleven chapters with subsections. Even included in Part XII are shorthand systems and numerical, music, and dance notations. In the sections which I felt competent to judge I could find no fault, but only admire the excellent organization and clear presentation, with charts and other helpful illustrations. Bibliographies follow each section, and an index concludes the volume.

What Editor Daniels remarked in his subsection "History of the Study of Writing" (6) concerning an 1821 book in German by Ulrich Friedrich Kopp could well be said concerning this huge volume: "His work would well repay careful study, though no single modern scholar would be competent to evaluate it in its entirety." It is difficult to imagine that anything more comprehensive will ever supersede this work.

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Davies, Eryl W. *Numbers*. The New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. 452 pp. Paper, \$23.00.

The New Century Bible Commentary differs in several ways from other well-known series. Comments are organized by pericopae or textual units, as usual, but not segmented for bibliography, translation, textual notes, form analysis, explanation, etc. Instead, most of those concerns of the commentator are interwoven into a continuous interpretation. While segmentation is handy for quick reference when looking for a specific kind of information, the non segmented approach of the *NCBC* makes for a high readability and is especially useful as an integrated overview of the results of scholarship on a given passage.

A comparison between this and some differently-organized commentaries shows that, in spite of the integrated approach, E. Davies has managed to present just as much information relevant to all those exegetical tasks as the other commentaries. Indeed, in certain cases he presents more, because the space saved by not giving a translation of the text (the series is intended to be used in conjunction with the Revised Standard Version) is put to good use by giving a fuller summary of the contents of the scholarly works belonging to the specific bibliography. And he has certainly done his homework in that kind of bibliography.

Davies is especially helpful when describing the various lines of interpretation

or ways in which a passage has been understood. In evaluating them he usually favors the most "classical" alternative, so to speak, from the viewpoint of modern interpretation. The evaluation is usually guarded and thoughtfully considered. An exception may be found on p. 17. When discounting the possibility that the census figures found in Numbers may derive from authentic sources, as suggested by several scholars, Davies claims that they are merely "the invention of the Priestly author," as evidenced by the fact that exactly six tribes had more, and six tribes had fewer members than the average for the twelve tribes. This result he deems artificial, but such "evidence" would certainly be disputed by any statistician.

Of special interest to many readers is the stance of a commentator toward the historical-critical method. The methodological approach used by Davies is fully critical, as usual in mainstream scholarship. The solid scholarship of the commentary, however, should not be ignored even by those who look for alternative ways to understand the text.

In his introduction of the book, the author deals with the problem of source division (xlv-li). However, the discussion of difficulties recently encountered by the Documentary Theory is centered solely on the challenge posed by Rendtorff, a scholar who does not rest his case primarily on evidence gathered from the book of Numbers. Therefore we must conclude that Davies is dealing with the problem of the composition of the Pentateuch as a whole. That being the case, the discussion hardly seems sufficient for the purpose. The problem of the Documentary Theory is certainly much larger than Rendtorff, and should not be dismissed merely by showing that this scholar has not proven his own version of the history of the composition of the Pentateuch.

The table of contents is very detailed for the introduction (12 lines for 30 pp.) but extremely succinct for the commentary (3 lines for 370 pp.). In particular, a list of excursuses (such as those of pp. 12-23) would be welcome.

As with other volumes in the series, this commentary has been carefully edited and is reasonably free from typographical mistakes. The typeface is compact but still very clear. This is a high-quality volume packed with information.

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Dockery, David S. ed. *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1995. 428 pp. \$16.99.

In the context of religion, philosophy, and politics, post-modernism is, roughly, the rejection of the Enlightenment's "understanding of human reason, human action, and human culture." For postmodernists, this dubious Enlightenment understanding is marked by such features as: a belief in the capacity of detached reason, using arguments and information accessible, comprehensible, and defensible to everyone, to ground moral, religious, and scientific practice; the importance of a measure of alienation from one's psychosocial context in order to achieve appropriate objectivity; the capacity of a political order dependent on agreement regarding fair procedures to meet the needs and foster the ends of persons with diverse substantive goals and convictions; the essentially—politically