

BOOK REVIEWS

Alomía, Merling, et al., eds. *Volviendo a los orígenes: Entendiendo el Pentateuco. Ponencias teológicas presentadas en el VI Simposio Bíblico-Teológico Sudamericano* (Returning to the origins: Understanding the Pentateuch. Theological papers presented at the VI South American biblical-theological symposium). Lima, Perú: Universidad Peruana Unión, 2006. xxx + 680 pp. Paper, \$20.00.

The Pentateuch has a long and strong appeal to Seventh-day Adventist scholarship. Therein are found the biblical foundations of important biblical teachings such as creation, the Sabbath, the Great Controversy, and the sanctuary. It is not a surprise, then, that the organizers of the VI South American Biblical-Theological Symposium chose the Pentateuch as the object of their reflection. The symposium met at the Universidad Peruana Unión (Lima, Peru) from 22-25 July 2004. This book contains a selection of 27 papers organized in seven sections: “Creation and the Pentateuch,” “Family Relationships and the Pentateuch,” “Health and the Pentateuch,” “Legal Issues in the Pentateuch,” “The New Testament and the Pentateuch,” “Current Issues in the Theology of the Pentateuch,” and “Miscellany on the Pentateuch.” The wide range of the sections attests to the broad focus of the symposium, which has been one of its distinctive and more appealing characteristics since the beginning.

The book also includes the text of the inaugural address, the voted declaration of the theological convictions of the symposium regarding human origins, helpful author and scriptural indices, and convenient summaries both in English and Spanish to every article. The indices and the summaries greatly facilitate access to the information and the editors should be commended for providing them. Other editorial tasks, however, should have been better performed. The book contains numerous orthographical and editorial mistakes. A quick reading of the list of abbreviations (xiii–xxii) exposed seven orthographical errors plus several others in the formatting of the text. Likewise, the English summary for the first article, written by a scholar from a non-English-speaking institution has six orthographical mistakes in nineteen lines of text (50). There are several passages where a wrong translation is evident (e.g., “criticismo” on p. 75 does not fit the context. It probably translates the English “criticism,” whose correct translation is “crítica.” On p. 315, the Spanish words “fundación” and “fundamento”—probably translating the English word “foundation”—are mistakenly used as synonyms. The phrase on p. 525, “desde Gén 12–50” should be translated “a Gén 12–50) and several others where the murkiness of the argument makes the reader wonder if it is the translation that has contributed to their opacity (e.g., the first sentence of the first paragraph on pp. 256, n. 25; 290, paragraph 1, lines 6-11). The book gives the impression of having been assembled hastily and carelessly. These shortcomings sadly detract from the effectiveness of the book and are unacceptable in a work of this nature. There is, however, valuable information in the book.

I will briefly evaluate *Volviendo a los orígenes* following the order of its sections, emphasizing only its more significant aspects.

Creation and the Pentateuch

Richard Davidson (“Volviendo a los orígenes: Génesis 1–3 y el centro teológico de las Escrituras” [Returning to the Origins: Genesis 1–3 and the theological center of the Scriptures]) proposes that Gen 1–3 provides a multifaceted theological center for Scripture and that this should not be understood as an “organizing principle” for biblical theology, but as the “orientation point” from which to understand the rest of Scripture. This multifaceted center involves four concepts that should guide the Bible reader: God is the creator; God is a personal relational being; the existence of a great moral controversy; and God’s promise of redemption.

Merling Alomía (“¿Cuán contradictorios son los dos primeros capítulos del Génesis?” [How contradictory are the first two chapters of Genesis?]) argues, against the supporters of the Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch, that the different accounts of the creation in Gen 1 and 2 are complementary and not contradictory. Each chapter introduces a different aspect of the person of God and the history of creation: the almighty God of creation in chapter 1 and the personal God of the covenant in chapter 2, as well as a movement from the general and distant to the particular and near. This article complements the inaugural address by the same author (“El Pentateuco en las lides académicas” [The Pentateuch in academic struggles]) where the last two centuries of debate regarding the authorship of the Pentateuch are traced.

Norman Gulley (“¿Es el Génesis un relato literal de la creación?” [Is Genesis a literal account of creation?]) clearly shows that the rejection of Gen 1–2 as a literal account and the acceptance of evolutionary views of the origin of the universe and life are inconsistent with the message of the rest of Scripture. Among other things, evolution negates the reality of sin and, therefore, the need for Jesus’ death on the cross and his gift of salvation. It also refutes the love and justice of God, together with his omnipotence and omniscience. Otherwise, why would he use the tortuous and cruel process of “natural selection” for the creation of species in our planet?

Kwabena Donkor (“El ‘escándalo de la historicidad’ en los estudios pentateucanos” [The “scandal of historicity” in the studies of the Pentateuch]) explores the “structural hermeneutical conditions” that inform the tendency of contemporary scholarship to deconstruct the historical accounts of the Pentateuch as myth or metaphor. He argues that critical scholarship has imposed on the reading of the Pentateuch secular philosophical presuppositions (predominantly Aristotelian-Platonic) that are alien to the biblical worldview of history. As a result, critical scholarship cannot accept those accounts as historical. He suggests, then, that the Pentateuch should be read and interpreted according to its own philosophical presuppositions (ontological and epistemological) and that these presuppositions can be found in passages such as Exod 3:14 and 6:2-7.

Family Relationships and the Pentateuch

Joel Peña writes a sociological analysis of Cain's conduct and that of his family. Jessica Romero ("Duelo y luto en el Pentateuco" [Grief and mourning in the Pentateuch]) reviews grief and mourning customs and their basic notions and compares them to that of other peoples from the ANE. In describing Hebrew customs of mourning, however, she does not appropriately distinguish between what we find in the Pentateuch and what is found outside of it (e.g., the Talmud). Juan Torrealba ("Características, delimitaciones y estructura del sistema familiar en el Pentateuco" [Characteristics, limitations and structure of the family system in the Pentateuch]) explores the original design of the family system and the impact of the fall on it.

Health and Pentateuch

Jaime Romero ("La salud y la curación en el Pentateuco" [Health and healing in the Pentateuch]) explores how different laws favorably impacted the health of the Hebrews in comparison to that of other nations—the Egyptians, for example. Similarly, Joel Leiva ("La dieta del Génesis y la esperanza de vida" [Diet in Genesis and life expectancy]) studies how changes in the diet right after the fall and then again after the flood affected life expectancy. Daniel Sumire ("Principios de Sistemas de Inocuidad para alimentos establecidos en el Pentateuco" [Principles of safeguarding systems for food established in the Pentateuch]) briefly surveys the purity rules of the Pentateuch and their importance for the prevention of disease.

Legal Issues in the Pentateuch

Gerald Klingbeil ("La perla perdida [o escondida] del Pentateuco: relevancia, significado y función del ritual bíblico" [The lost (or hidden) pearl of the Pentateuch: relevance, meaning and function of biblical ritual]) provides a brief introduction to the theory of ritual with a description of its main characteristics and limitations. He defines ritual as "repetitive actions and behaviors that are understood by a particular group or community as the expression of something that goes beyond the mere understanding of its individual actions" (225). Gerald also includes reading strategies for ritual texts. Toward the end of the article, he suggests several ways in which ritual can contribute to preaching, teaching, and pastoral ministry, suggesting that ritual can be especially effective in strategies for pastoral counseling, liturgy, and mission. This is one of the most thought-provoking studies in the book. I hope further studies will make possible the realization of the seminal ideas of this article into innovative solutions and strategies for the life and mission of the church. Yet, further study is necessary. Is Klingbeil's definition of ritual specific or accurate enough to be helpful? What criteria should control the use of ritual in the life and mission of the church?

Jo Ann Davidson ("La expiación según Moisés" [Atonement according to Moses]) contributes a narrative analysis of Gen 22. In a carefully guided process, she uncovers little-explored aspects of the text and spells out their

theological import. She closes the study with an analysis of the impact of Gen 22 on Paul's teaching of the atonement provided in Christ.

Carmelo Martínez ("El falso testigo (Deuteronomy 19:15-21): Un caso de jurisprudencia hebrea y su presentación tipológica" [The false witness (Deuteronomy 19:15-21): A case of Hebrew jurisprudence and its typological import]) analyzes the law concerning witnesses and testimony (Deut 19:15-21) and explains the typological dimension of this law in the judgment and punishment of Satan, the "accuser," in Rev 20.

The New Testament and the Pentateuch

Ekkehardt Müller's "Jesús y el Pentateuco" (Jesus and the Pentateuch) studies how Jesus used the Pentateuch and focuses on an analysis of Jesus' direct quotations of the Pentateuch according to the four canonical Gospels. Admittedly, the task is too great to be treated in an article; yet, he is able to keep the focus of the work and to conclude it with a fitting evaluation of the import of Jesus' use of the Pentateuch for modern readers.

Martín Klingbeil ("Exclusivismo o inclusivismo: El concepto de ciudadanía en el Pentateuco y su uso metafórico en Efesios" [Exclusion or inclusion: The concept of citizenship in the Pentateuch and its metaphorical use in Ephesians]) studies the concept of citizenship and its development throughout Israel's history. He argues that the biblical concept struck a balance between inclusion and exclusion, but that this was not observed in Israel's experience. He suggests that Paul in Ephesians provides the elements for the restoration of that balance in the cross of Christ; finally he extrapolates lessons for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a multicultural and multiethnic movement.

Roberto Pereyra ("Visión deuteronomica de la historia de Israel: un estudio de 1 Tes 2:16c" [A Deuteronomic vision of the history of Israel: A study of 1 Thessalonians 2:16c]) rejects the interpretation of 1 Thess 2:16c, one of the difficult passages of the NT, which sees the verse as a reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He suggests that Deuteronomic language is the key for understanding the "wrath of God" in this instance as the "absence of salvation." This wrath corresponds to the "wrath that is coming" (1 Thess 1:10)—the punishment at the end of time.

Raúl Quiroga ("El binomio altar/sacrificio como centro teológico del Pentateuco y su significado y simbolismo para el Nuevo Testamento" [The binomial altar/sacrifice as the theological center of the Pentateuch and its meaning and symbolism for the New Testament]) suggests the binomial altar/sacrifice as the organizing element or integrating topic of the Pentateuch on the basis of its ubiquity, though it is not clear why this criterion is sufficient.

Current Issues in the Theology of the Pentateuch

Mario Veloso ("Antropología del Pentateuco ¿Historia real sobre los orígenes de la humanidad?" [Anthropology of the Pentateuch: Is it an actual history about the origins of humanity?]) seeks to answer the question of whether the Pentateuch accounts are simple myths and metaphors. He proposes a negative answer from the perspective of anthropology. Víctor Figueroa ("El sábado:

una perspectiva escatológica” [Sabbath: An eschatological perspective]) explores the eschatological dimensions of the Sabbath, explaining how it prefigures the consummation of salvation after the final liberation.

Jorge Torreblanca (“Los ‘cinco quintos de la ley’: implicaciones de una estructura teológica unitaria” [The “five fifths of the law”: implications of a united theological structure]) defends the theological unity of the Pentateuch and proposes “the revelation of the character of God” as the central theological theme or *mitte* of the Pentateuch. He bases his proposal on the acceptance of the structures of the Pentateuch in general and Leviticus in particular, and, as suggested by Richard Davidson and William H. Shea respectively, that have Lev 16 at their center (436-438).

David P. Gullón’s article, “El Mesías en el Pentateuco: la esperanza mesiánica en el libro del Génesis” (The Messiah in the Pentateuch: The messianic hope in the book of Genesis) seeks to provide a study of the promise of a future deliverer in the Pentateuch. (The author should not use the term “Messiah” to describe or name his article. The word “Messiah” [lit. anointed] does not appear in Genesis. Similarly, the verb “to anoint” appears just once [Gen 31:13] and does not refer to a person. An imprecise use of this term confuses categories and contributes to a skewed reading of the text.) The article provides less than that. It analyzes only the promise of Gen 3:15. The promises of a seed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are studied superficially and the blessing on Judah (Gen 49:8-10) is not dealt with.

Carlos Mora (“Implicaciones teológicas de los usos del Pentateuco en el libro de Daniel” [Theological implications of the use of the Pentateuch in the book of Daniel]) shows how the theological argument of Daniel presupposes and requires an understanding of the Pentateuch and its theology. This is an insightful article.

Miscellany on the Pentateuch

Teófilo Correa writes “El motivo del pacto y elección en Deuteronomio 10: Breve estudio del libro y análisis contextual de Deuteronomy 10:1-11” (The covenant and election motif in Deuteronomy 10: A brief study of the book and a contextual analysis of Deuteronomy 10:1-11). David Merling (“El libro de Génesis: sus preocupaciones y contextos internos” [The book of Genesis: its concerns and internal contexts]) studies the chronologies of Genesis and how the consistency of their nature and purpose throughout the book of Genesis suggests the literary unity of the book and how incongruous it is to consider Gen 1–11 fiction, while treating the rest of the book as nonfiction. Edgard Horna (“Balaam y el Mesías guerrero” [Balaam and the warrior Messiah]) provides an interesting analysis of the oracle of Num 24:17-19 and its interpretation in the book of Revelation. Daniel Rode (“Misión a todas las etnias en el pacto con Abraham, Isaac, y Jacob” [Mission to all the ethnic groups in the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob]) studies the promise made to Abraham about his seed as a blessing to “all the nations”—which is repeated five times in Genesis—and its meaning for the mission of the church. His reading of Matt 24:14, which requires the conversion of persons

from all ethnic groups before the end comes, does not have appropriate textual support (585). In fact, the parallel of Col 1:23 seems to undermine this reading. At any rate, his point that God's plan for the mission of the church has always been inclusive of all ethnic groups on earth is well made. Jiri Moskala ("Concepto y noción de la iglesia en el Pentateuco" [The concept and notion of church in the Pentateuch]) provides a brief introduction to the idea of church in the Pentateuch, beginning with an analysis of the vocabulary and including a sketch of the development of this theme throughout the Pentateuch. The article is insightful and provides a good starting point for a fuller study of the topic in the Bible.

Volviendo a los orígenes conveys the vibrant voice of the Seventh-day Adventist theological movement in South America, which is full of energy and ambitious to be heard and to weigh in on the theological debates of the Adventist Church. Its appeal and major success resides in its ability to add a variety of perspectives from different fields of thought to the study of the biblical text and its implications. Though eclectic in its approach, the views and convictions of the authors are clearly unified in a high view of Scripture and in their rejection of the Documentary Hypothesis. The book is of uneven quality. It contains articles that stand out for their lucidity and clarity, while the argument of others is more difficult to follow and their contribution more tenuous. The book remains, however, an example of the reward that can be obtained when people from different disciplines think together about the Bible and its meaning for the church today. We can only hope that the South American Biblical-Theological Symposium will continue to prosper, publish, and grow in its ability to convene the voices of people from different parts of the world and from different disciplines.

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Desplan, Fabrice, and Régis Dericquebourg, eds. *Ces protestants que l'on dit Adventistes*, Collection: Théologie et vie politique de la terre. Paris: l'Harmattan, 2008. 250 pp. Paper, €23,27.

Two State institutions dominate higher education in France: The Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (National Center for Scientific Research), and l'École Pratique des Hautes Etudes (School of Higher Studies, a specific department of the famous Sorbonne University in Paris). Since 1995, they have joined their efforts in a research group named *Society, Religions and Laicizations*. The book under present review, *Those Protestants Who are Named Adventists*, is the outcome of the yearly colloquium of this group, held in Paris on 3 May 2007. It is dedicated entirely to the study of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the French setting, this sudden interest in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a result of a specific event that occurred on 11 March 2006, when the Adventist Church was accepted as a full member of the Fédération Protestante