

page "Index" that provides access to practically every event, person, feature, and publication referenced in the *Handbook*.

Andrews University

RUSSELL L. STAPLES

Alter, Robert. *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton. xvii + 394 pp. Hardcover, \$35.00.

The author of a significant number of books, including *The Art of Biblical Poetry* and *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, Robert Alter currently serves as the Class of 1937 Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. The current work, *The Wisdom Books*, is the latest installment of his well-known series of original translations of OT books. The book is a hybrid between a traditional commentary and a translation. It differs from traditional commentaries in that it does not delve into technical issues such as literary structure and linguistic minutiae or issues such as date and provenance that are usually treated extensively in commentaries. Rather, it focuses on the theological and linguistic features of the biblical text that shape Alter's translation.

The introductions to each of the biblical books (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes) begin with brief overviews and then proceed to a lively, readable translation of each of the books that attempts to retain as nearly as possible the poetic nature of the books, while remaining faithful to the Hebrew text. Along with the translation, Alter provides running commentary, though it is not verse-by-verse as is found in most modern commentaries. Instead, he comments on words and phrases that he has translated differently from the norm or that have particular interest to the literary and theological flow of the book. He often points to inter- and intratextual parallels that help the reader to understand the greater context of OT wisdom literature.

Alter relies primarily on his own expertise in Biblical Hebrew, though he notes in the introduction that it has been checked for form and content by scholars in the field. The book lacks footnotes and has only a brief bibliography, both of which would have been beneficial for the reader who would like to explore differing opinions or to know who influenced Alter. He does, however, refer to various scholars from time to time in the commentary and notes the work of Michael V. Fox in the introduction to the section on Proverbs.

The primary strength of this work is that it gives readers a fresh, accurate translation of OT wisdom literature. Alter truly is a master at translation, which this work demonstrates well. The commentary is also well done. While it leaves many things unsaid that a traditional commentary would normally cover, it brings to light significant aspects of the language and theology of the texts. For example, Alter interprets Job as a frame story (chaps. 1-2, and 42)

that has been filled in with folklore and makes significant use of mythological language.

Alter has brilliantly succeeded in his goal of producing a lively, readable translation of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. I highly recommend this book to any reader who wishes to understand the overarching theological themes of these books and to read a translation that brings those themes to light. Alter manages to avoid overly technical language, and his discussion far outweighs any shortcomings.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Kansas City, Missouri

RUSSELL L. MEEK

Beentjes, Pancratius C. *Tradition and Transformation in the Books of Chronicles*, Studia Semitica Neerlandica 52. Leiden: Brill, 2008, xiii + 211 pp. Cloth, \$154.00.

Over the past few decades, the Book of Chronicles, a historical work long neglected and even dismissed by some biblical scholars, has been the recipient of a resurgence of scholarly interest and activity. This renewed attention has, in turn, resulted in a rise in the number of publications dedicated to this important source of biblical history (for a recent survey of this development, see the discussion by Sarah Japhet, *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah: Collected Studies on the Restoration Period* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 399-415; see esp. the cited references in n. 1). The reasoning behind this renewed scholarly awareness is based in part upon an ongoing reevaluation of the Chronicler and his merit as a historian, which has slowly yet steadily shifted scholarship toward a more positive appraisal of his work. The question at the heart of the debate regards the Chronicler's use of older sources. Specifically, what, if any, early (pre-exilic) materials did the Chronicler possess and how faithful was he to their content when utilizing them? Despite the Chronicler's extensive use of source citations throughout his work, many scholars remain highly skeptical regarding several issues: the veracity of additional information the Chronicler provides that is not found in Samuel-Kings; the long length of time spanning the events the Chronicler records and his own lifetime, which must be dated at some time during the postexilic (Persian) period; and the Chronicler's theological *tendenz* that many scholars believe led him to modify, embellish, or even create accounts to suit his theological viewpoint. Of the Chronicler's theological views, his emphasis upon a theology of immediate retribution is perhaps the most recognizable.

While Pancratius C. Beentjes, the author of the volume under review, is well aware of these issues, he generally avoids focusing on issues of historicity, but rather devotes his attention to the Chronicler's literary style, message, and theology. Only in chapter 7, where he presents the issue of the Chronicler's