

of Hatch and Redpath, but does not require ready access to that bulky work, as did the 1998 edition. Moreover, there is new data supplied here, including some references to the so-called apocrypha, Qumran manuscripts, and various recensions of the Greek OT/LXX. As a companion to Hatch and Redpath and Muraoka's 2009 lexicon, this is an indispensable tool not only for septuagintal studies, but for anyone engaged in critical research in the OT or NT.

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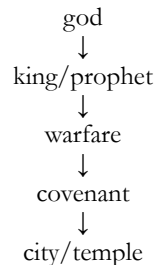
DANIEL M. GURTNER

Niehaus, Jeffrey J. *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008. 203 pp. Paper, \$18.99.

Many scholars have written on the ancient Near Eastern background of Scripture, but not all have focused on how the ancient worldviews have shaped biblical theology. Even fewer have traced its influence on the NT. Jeffrey Jay Niehaus, a Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, explores possible ancient Near Eastern influences in a number of major biblical themes, including concepts such as the royal shepherd, covenant and conquest, city and temple, and the eventual restoration of all things. He regards these themes as an integration into a specific schema outlining how God operates in the world—a schema that was widely known and understandable to the ancient world. He proposes that

The basic structure of ideas is this: A god works through a man (a royal or prophetic figure, often styled a shepherd) to wage war against the god's enemies and thereby advance his kingdom. The royal or prophetic protagonist is in a covenant with the god, as are the god's people. The god establishes a temple among his people, either before or after the warfare, because he wants to dwell among them. This can mean the founding (or choice) of a city, as well as a temple location. The ultimate purpose is to bring into the god's kingdom those who were not part of it (30).

He then provides a simple outline to illustrate this process:



Niehaus first examines these overarching themes in their Egyptian and various Mesopotamian contexts, providing extensive background material. Then he explores how a similar process is developed and handled in the Bible. He sees each of these themes as finally realized in Jesus, who becomes humanity's shepherd, wages spiritual warfare, conquers, fulfills the covenant, and dwells in the church, his city/temple.

Not only does this give the modern interpreter clues as to how the biblical writers and their audiences might have understood such concepts, but it might also give the modern reader hints as to how they should apply the biblical version of such themes to the contemporary situation. For example, a recent controversy among some evangelicals is how to understand certain NT statements that seem to imply that Jesus placed himself subordinate to God the Father (see, e.g., Millard J. Erickson, *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* [Grand Rapids, Kregel, 2009]). After describing how ancient Egyptian pharaohs, as "sons" of the god Amon, would present a newly won kingdom to their "father" deity, Niehaus points to a Christological parallel in 1 Cor 15:24-25 in which Jesus offers his kingdom to his Father (69; for further expansion of the concept, see pp. 62-82). It would be interesting to explore what implications this ancient theme might have for interpreting the Jesus-subordinationist texts.

Niehaus shows the strong parallels between the ancient Near Eastern understanding of how the gods functioned and how the God of Israel operated. But how should we view them? Did ancient Israel just build upon the surrounding worldview? While he does not elaborate, Niehaus does not regard the biblical writers to be a mere reflection of the surrounding cultures. Rather, he sees the parallels between ancient Near Eastern pagan theology and biblical theology as a contrast between a distorted and counterfeit theology that he suggests was promulgated by the demonic influences discussed by the apostle Paul and a divinely inspired theology that God revealed through his prophets and the biblical writers (179). He believes God allows "such theological parallels as we have explored to become manifest over many centuries in the ancient world so that truth would appear, even in darkened and polytheistic forms. Truth in such forms could have no saving power, but it did prepare a matrix of thought, a background of theological understanding, so that when God truly appeared and did such things as the pagans had claimed for their gods—instituting covenants, giving laws, commanding conquest and extending his kingdom, even by signs and wonders—his revelation would come to a people who had some theological preparation for it" (181).

Whether or not one accepts Niehaus's conclusion, his work on these ancient themes, when balanced with how Scripture itself employs them, should help illuminate additional depths of the biblical text. To cite just one instance, after presenting the imagery of Assyrian monarchs as mighty hunters, especially of lions, he points out how David employs the same royal

typology, thus indicating that he is also of royal lineage (48-50), then traces the imagery's Christological use. David's explanation of why he was qualified to face Goliath was far more than a recounting of some dramatic incidents in his shepherding experience.

One major theme that Niehaus does not deal with is that of creation. It would be interesting to see how he would apply his model, especially to the Christological aspects of creation.

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Peterson, Eugene H. *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. 302 pp. Hardcover, \$24.00.

*Practice Resurrection* is the fifth book in Eugene H. Peterson's five-volume series on spiritual theology, a capstone accomplishment in his writing vocation. Among contemporary writers on spirituality, Peterson towers high with his insistent focus on the work of the Triune God. His books are an antidote to spirituality books that focus primarily on detailed instructions on how to seek God.

Peterson's stature as a major writer on Christian spirituality has grown out of his twenty-nine years as Pastor of the Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland, his fifteen years as Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the more than thirty books he has written on the Christian life. He is best known as the translator of *The Message*, a popular paraphrase of the Bible.

*Practice Resurrection* is based on Ephesians. His many years of teaching the book of Ephesians in the church and college settings have added to his understanding and equipped him to write this new book. The strange title, *Practice Resurrection*, brings to mind the common expression "practice the spiritual disciplines." However, it is unlikely that Peterson intends that connection. This book, like his other books on spirituality, emphasizes God's work, not ours. Far be it from Peterson to focus on human activity; his theme is always on the activity and grace of God.

The phrase "practice resurrection" comes from the poet Wendell Berry, and Peterson understands it to mean to "grow up in Christ" (70). "When we practice resurrection, we keep company with Jesus, alive and present, who knows where we are going better than we do, which is always 'from glory to glory'" (8). Sooner or later anyone serious about growing up in Christ will have to confront and be confronted by the church, a reality that leads him to Ephesians. Peterson's reflection on Ephesians and the church, however, is not a sales pitch, enticing the reader with visions of what the church can do for him or what she can do for the church. He rejects the church as a "humanly managed popular provider of religious goods and services" (28).