

Hartshorne, he might have mentioned the extensive efforts of Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, and Gregory A. Boyd, to mention a few, all of whom address a number of Peckham's central concerns from a perspective similar to his.

One question that open theists are bound to ask, however, is how Peckham can consistently affirm God's intimate sensitivity to the world and God's genuine interaction with the creatures—both features of his foreconditional-reciprocal model and important elements in an open view of God—and yet accept the traditional view of divine foreknowledge. True, he concedes that the latter is not essential to his model of divine love, but for open theists the two are logically incompatible. If God sees the future in all its detail, open theists maintain, then God's experience already includes the future, and the actual occurrence of events contributes nothing new. It may be true that we anticipate things without fully experiencing them, but this distinction could hardly apply to God. For if God knows the entire future absolutely, then there can be no difference in God's experience between anticipation and realization. The notion of exhaustive foreknowledge excludes it.

There are other theologians, too, whose work Peckham might well have considered. He mentions Charles Hartshorne a number of times, an important process thinker, and one whose writings provide a good example of the "immanent-experientialist model." But Hartshorne—as well as Alfred North Whitehead, who is somewhat better known—was a philosopher, not a theologian, strictly speaking. I wonder why Peckham, in view of his extensive analyses of theological sources, did not rely more on thinkers who employ process thought in their work as Christian theologians, such as John B. Cobb, Jr., Schubert M. Ogden, Daniel Day Lewis, David Griffin, and Marjorie Suchocki. In general, representatives of the "transcendent-voluntarist model" receive far more space than those of this position.

Whatever additional avenues Peckham's discussion might have followed, the wealth of information he provides and the clarity of his presentations will make his study valuable to a wide variety of readers. It is a noteworthy contribution to contemporary reflections on God.

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Smith, Gary V. *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook*. Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014. 214 pp. Paperback, \$22.99.

Gary V. Smith, PhD (Dropsie College, 1973), has taught OT at Winnipeg Theological Seminary (1973–1983), Bethel Theological Seminary (1983–1998), Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1998–2004), and Union University (2004–2010). He also has published several books on the prophetic books of the OT: *Old Testament Survey, Part 2: Job–Malachi* (1991, repr. 2014), which was also reprinted in both *Exploring the Old Testament* (2001) and *Exploring the Bible* (2007); *The Prophets as Preachers: An Introduction to the*

*Hebrew Prophets* (1994); *Amos* (2nd ed., 1998); *Hosea, Amos, Micah* (2001); *Isaiah 1–39* (2007); and *Isaiah 40–66* (2009).

Smith's latest book, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books*, is a reflection on his experience of over 35 years of teaching and writing (17). As part of the Handbook for Old Testament Exegesis series, the book follows the same six-chapter arrangement found in the other volumes of the series. The first four chapters focus on the theoretical issues (nature of the genres, themes, preparing for interpretation, and interpretive issues), while the last two chapters focus on the practical issues (proclamation and application).

Chapter 1 introduces the genre of biblical prophecies. According to the author, most prophets focused on ethics rather than eschatology (24). This means that they were more concerned with the people's adherence to the stipulations of the covenant than with the promise of the covenant. This may be the case for the reason that the latter is probably conditional to the former. Although they share common features, Smith highlights that prophecies differ with regard to their literary style (narrative or poetry), genre (judgment or salvation), and time of their fulfillment (present, future, or far future). One interesting aspect of this chapter is that Smith points out that the distinction between apocalyptic and classical texts is not always clear-cut, because many classical prophecies also contain symbolic language (e.g. Isa 24, Ezek 38–39, Zech 6).

Chapter 2 presents a thematic overview of each prophetic book. The author notes that even though the prophets had unique messages, they shared a common view of God and the future. As to God, they taught that God was sovereign, creator, lawgiver, judge, redeemer, commander, etc. Concerning the future, they taught that God's plan could not be thwarted. He is in total control.

Chapter 3 elaborates on four essential pieces of data the readers should consider when interpreting a prophetic text. According to Smith, interpreters should know (1) the "historical setting," because this "will help interpreters understand why the prophet confronted his audience about certain issues (86); (2) how biblical prophecy differs from ancient Near Eastern prophecy, because this will help readers sympathize with the prophets' pathos (97); (3) how to use "textual criticism," because interpreters need to make sure that the text they choose is reliable (98); and (4) how to find help from commentaries, because interpreters need to explore other possibilities (103).

Chapter 4 discusses six key issues that are important in the interpretation of prophecies concerning the future: (1) whether the language used was literal or figurative; (2) whether or not the prophecy was limited by the prophet's historical setting; (3) whether the prophecy was conditional or unconditional; (4) whether the prophecy refers to an event in the immediate or distant future; (5) the apparent differences between some OT prophecies and their NT fulfillment; and finally, (6) apparently unfulfilled prophecies. This chapter is a must-read due to its uniqueness in discussing the hermeneutics of prophetic books.

Chapter 5 details four practical steps to be followed when preparing a sermon on the prophetic books. The first one is "getting oriented." Once a

prophetic text has been chosen, preachers need to read the text, define its setting, appreciate its literary context, make an outline of the passage, and analyze the passage. These steps are based on the four basic facts presented in chapter 3, with the exception of the last two steps. The second step is “shaping the presentation,” which consists of how to communicate the message of the text to different kinds of audiences. The third step is to determine the theological principles behind the passage. This is the most important step because it is the one in which the interpreter bridges the gap between the biblical text and contemporary life, allowing the last step, the application, to flow smoothly from it.

Chapter 6 illustrates the process described in chapter 5, using Isa 31:1–9 and Jer 23:1–8 as examples. Both passages were selected because they reflect two of the main problems interpreters may find when it comes to application: past and future prophecies. The first passage refers to the war between Judah and Assyria, which was an issue limited to the prophet’s temporal setting (past prophecies). Therefore, preachers may feel challenged when it comes to making fulfilled prophecies relevant and applicable to their audience. The second passage is temporally framed to the eschaton and also defied the way “not yet” prophecies may be applied to present time.

This book has many practical aspects for which Smith should be commended. It has a compendious summary of the biblical prophetic books, which is great for an introduction. It contains a summary of the setting and main themes of each prophetic book (chs. 2–3); it deals with their hermeneutics (chs. 1, 4); and it provides practical steps for using their message in today preaching (chs. 5–6). Although some information overlaps with Smith’s previous work (e.g., Malachi’s six disputations [83–84] are found in *Exploring the Old Testament* [206–8]), most of it is new. Despite his many books on the subject, the author in this one discloses his point of view regarding methodology and deals with introductory matters of the prophetic books for the first time.

In addition, Smith has a practical treatment of the topics. For instance, when commenting on the themes found in the prophetic books, the author prefers to follow the order of the Christian canon (60). In doing so, he has an indirect pretext to include Lamentations and Daniel, which in the Hebrew canonical organization belongs to the Writings (see 98 n. 10). However, when dealing with the process of interpreting (ch. 3), Smith prefers to follow the chronological order. In this way, he upholds the principle that for sound interpretation, readers should care about the historical setting before jumping to any conclusions. Another feature interpreters will appreciate is the list of ten core end-time themes (131). Having knowledge of these themes enables the interpreter to recognize eschatological prophecies that lack explicit temporal indicators. Finally, unlike the previous books of the series, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books* has an index, which adds to the usefulness of this book.

While practical for beginning interpreters of biblical prophetic books, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books* could have been improved by including brief annotations concerning the nature of recommended commentaries. For

example, the author advises that the interpreter should consult at least three types of commentaries, namely, those focused on (1) historical details; (2) theology or application; and (3) Hebrew grammar, syntax, or word studies (103). However, in his list of recommended resources (104–9), he did not deem opportune to specify to which category each reference belongs. Such information would have provided a much better orientation for incipient interpreters. Regardless, this observation does not take away from the practicability of this book in accomplishing the main purpose of the author, which is to assist seminary students and pastors who want to understand and preach from the prophetic books of the OT (17).

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