

BOOK REVIEWS

Abernethy, Andrew T. *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom: A Thematic Theological Approach*. NSBT 40. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016. ix + 201 pp. Softcover. USD 25.00.

The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom is the third book that Andrew Abernethy has published. Abernethy, a faculty member at Wheaton College and a graduate from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has already published *Eating in Isaiah: Approaching Food and Drink in Isaiah's Structure and Message*, BibInt 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2014) and edited with others *Isaiah and Imperial Context: The Book of Isaiah in Times of Empire* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013). In addition, he published several essays and articles in journals; for example, "God as Teacher in Psalms 25" *VT* 65 (2015): 339–351, and "The People of God in Isaiah: Trembling at God's Word" *Reflections* 16–17 (2015): 27–36, which is a Festschrift for Eugene Carpenter.

Abernethy does not specify his motivation for writing this book; however, he outlines the purpose of his monograph as being a commentary on the biblical theology of Isaiah, more specifically on one theme: the kingdom of God. He also suggests that his intent is to target a different audience than does Goldingay, who writes primarily for laypeople, saying that *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom* is intended for pastors and advanced college and seminary students. Interestingly, Abernethy does not indicate that the theme "kingdom," a unifying concept throughout the book of Isaiah, would support the view of Isaiah as the sole author rather than multiple authors, although he does say that his book is an attempt to use "kingdom" as a unifying concept (ix).

The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom is divided into five chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion. In these five chapters, the author focuses on four features of kingdom in Isaiah: (a) God, the king; (b) The lead agents of the king; (c) The realm of the kingdom; and (d) The people of the king (2). Logically, Abernethy follows a traditional approach to thematic theology in laying out his chapters. In the first chapter, titled "God, the King Now and to Come in Isaiah 1–39," he concentrates his attention on Isa 6:24:21–23; 25:6–8; 33; and 36–37. In chapter two, "God, the Only Saving King in Isaiah 40–55," he turns his attention to Isa 40:1–11; 53:7–10, and God's kingship in other motifs in Isa 40–55. The third chapter is about "God, the Warrior, International and Compassionate King in Isaiah 56–66;" and the fourth chapter is "The Lead Agents of the King," where he utilizes the sub-titles "The Davidic Ruler in Isaiah 1–39," "The Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 40–55," and "God's Messenger in Isaiah 56–66." Finally, the last chapter, "The Realm and the People of God's Kingdom," is an overview of the entire book of Isaiah. As can be seen from these chapters, Abernethy also divides his thematic approach according to the critical division of the book of Isaiah, that is, Isa 1–39; Isa 40–55; and Isa 56–66. However, while he does not point it out specifically, his thematic theological approach shows more integration among these three sections of the book of Isaiah than he may care to admit. Abernethy sits on the fence between approaching Isaiah from the

viewpoint of critical scholars and trying to be faithful to the traditional way of doing theology (see 4–5).

The primary strength of Abernethy's book is the author's consistent focus on a primary theological theme throughout the entire book of Isaiah. In addition, the author takes time to deal with difficult passages where often the theme of God's kingdom may be disregarded, yet he gives the readers new perspectives and challenges on which to reflect. This book contains a good bibliography, indexes, and one appendix. It is well structured, which makes it easy to follow the author's development of concepts. While this book is scholarly in nature, the author targets primarily pastors and advanced college and seminary students. This audience will find a wealth of information for sermon preparation.

The author establishes his methodology in the introduction as employing both a diachronic and synchronic approach (7). He also gives an overview of his approach to biblical theology and how this applies to the book of Isaiah. Abernethy's book grabs the reader's attention in chapter one, where he gives good theological examples from Isa 1–39 that God is the king. For each example, he expands on the reasons why God is the king in Isaiah and explores some passages that have been overlooked in the support of his argument; including Isa 24:21–23 and 25:6–8. In chapter two, Abernethy shows how God is now the saving king of Isa 40–55, and proceeds in the following chapter to show that God becomes the warrior and compassionate king of Isa 56–66. Thus, in the first three chapters, Abernethy's theology on kingship is well developed, with no major challenges except for some exegetical passages where he depends too much on critical scholars to support his points. For example, he overlooks how Isaiah is employing the concept of a Davidic figure or how the servant in Isaiah is represented as divine (104, 138), pointing to a greater figure in the future.

In his introduction, Abernethy defines biblical theology (5); however, his principles are not always consistently or correctly applied in the rest of the book. In Isaiah, God uses a Davidic figure and the servant figure to reveal what God has to say about Himself. It appears that the author may have been influenced by what the critics say on certain passages; for example, he agrees that the servant in the first servant song is Israel (see 138–142). Yet, in doing so the author overlooks more recent exegetical work on this passage (and not only from conservative scholars, as he suggests). What is surprising is that Abernethy shows how some of the passages in Isaiah are used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus, but then overlooks how Isa 42:1–9 was quoted by Jesus in Matt 12 in reference to himself. Although Abernethy refers to Matt 12, he sees the servant as Israel, "God's servant Israel who brings gentle justice" (159), and not Jesus. Yet he has no problem in equating the servant with Jesus in Isa 53. Nevertheless, in both passages it is clear that the author inserts his biases based on what the exegetes have done. It appears that he is selective in choosing the passages attributed to God, in terms of God's kingdom in Isaiah, and ignores other passages that could have actually given even greater support

to his monograph. One gets the same sense with Isa 7, which Abernethy again approaches with great theological gymnastics to make his point (121–125).

My greatest concern was with chapter four, as already described in the paragraph above. Part of the problem is that Abernethy uses only one aspect of doing biblical theology, while generally disregarding other methods of biblical theology. For example, while he does not use the term, he does employ some components of the biblical theology methodology of typology. However, he is not consistent in its application to the passages observed in Isaiah. Thus, the weakest point of his monologue is found in chapter 4, and I would caution readers to approach it with an understanding of the author's presuppositions and chosen methodology.

In spite of these weaknesses, Abernethy's book is a valuable resource and an important contribution to scholarship. It contains a wealth of sources and information, and both seminary students and pastors will benefit from having it at hand for further research. This book could easily be used as a textbook at the college or graduate level and provides multiple advantages in understanding the book of Isaiah and God's kingdom from a theological approach. It is particularly helpful for readers who seek to understand the theology within one entire biblical book such as Isaiah.

Pacific Union College
Angwin, California

STÉPHANE BEAULIEU

Collins, John J. *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigrapha: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. x + 389 pp. Softcover. USD 34.00.

John J. Collins is the Holmes Professor of Old Testament Criticism and Interpretation at Yale Divinity School, where he has taught since 2000. He is a prolific writer and has published extensively in the area of the Old Testament and Second Temple period Judaism, and is considered one of the foremost experts on Apocalyptic literature. He has authored twenty-six academic books, edited twenty-four, and written three hundred academic articles in addition to popular church-oriented books (eleven) and articles (forty-seven). In addition to serving on several editorial boards, he has also served as editor-in-chief for the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1989–1994), *Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism* (1994–2008), *Dead Sea Discoveries* (2003–2008), and is currently the general editor of *Yale Anchor Bible Series* (2008–present). He is a popular guest lecturer who has been invited to speak at universities in the United States of America, Europe, and Israel. He was born in Ireland and received his BA (Semitics and Classics) and MA (Semitics and Classics) from the University of Dublin and his PhD (Near Eastern Languages and Literatures) from Harvard University.

Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigrapha: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature complements Collins's *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016) and contains nineteen essays—sixteen of which have been previously published during the past fifteen years, and three which are