

BOOK REVIEWS

Bartholomew, Craig, G., and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. 252 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

Craig G. Bartholomew, Chair of Philosophy at Redeemer University, Ontario, Canada, is the author of *Reading Ecclesiastes*, and coeditor of the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Michael W. Goheen, who teaches religion and theology at Redeemer University, is the author of *As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You*. Both scholars bring their own expertise to this volume: one as a biblical scholar, the other as a missiologist.

Bartholomew and Goheen propose that each person has a worldview that influences thoughts, decisions, and actions. Even the way the Bible is read is influenced by a particular worldview. Due to the humanistic worldview, which is rooted in the Enlightenment and that is predominate in Western thought, Westerners are in danger of losing sight of the unity of the Bible because it is often treated as a collection of stories, laws, and poetry, which have no internal connection to one another. This fragmentation of the Bible is seen, unfortunately, even in contemporary churches and apologetic works. Theologians, evangelists, and preachers, looking for biblical support for their particular doctrinal views, often pick and choose verses out of their natural context, thereby reducing the Bible to propositional statements. In *The Drama of Scripture*, Bartholomew and Goheen seek to rediscover the wider perspective from which all the elements and pieces of the Bible fit together in order to preserve the natural unity of the Bible.

For the authors, “the Bible has the shape of a story” (21). Thus *The Drama of Scripture* is structured as a six-act play, with interlude. The story begins at creation, then moves on to the fall and Israel’s history. After a short interlude, representing the intertestamental period, the life of Jesus is presented, followed by the mission of the church and the restoration of all things.

While other biblical theologies tend to focus on particular central themes in the Bible (e.g., covenant, salvation, blessing, promise, and fulfillment), Bartholomew and Goheen choose to join Arthur Glasser and Charles van Engen in looking for the embracing theme “kingdom of God” (cf. *Announcing the Kingdom* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003]). Although the authors survey most of the biblical books in a modest 250 pages, they still find space to deal with misconceptions about the text and even introduce new textual and theological insights.

The authors’ first goal is to help the reader understand the “true nature of Scripture” as God’s story (11). They adopt the paradigm of “grand narrative,” used by Leslie Newbigin, Alasdair MacIntyre, and N. T. Wright, in order to discover the ongoing story behind the biblical text. Bartholomew and Goheen agree that the Bible is the “norm for faith and life” (21), but they indicate that Scripture directs faith and life only when one’s story becomes part of the biblical story. The key word is *involvement*.

What Bartholomew and Goheen mean by “involvement” is “mission.” It is only natural that the primary emphasis of the book is “the centrality of mission within the biblical story” (13). The fact that the concept of “mission” is generally overlooked in the OT is due to Israel’s failure to fulfill its duty. The Bible reader may easily lose sight of God’s original plan to evangelize all the nations and Abraham’s commission to become a “blessing for nations” due to Israel’s egocentrism. *The Drama of Scripture* corrects this problem by pointing to God’s unchanging plan to offer his salvation to all people. Stories such as Esther, Ruth, Naaman, and Jonah make sense in light of God’s desire to save the nations. Even Israel’s exile becomes sensible when seen as a response to its failure to fulfill its mission. However, I would disagree with the authors’ viewpoint

that God's missiological character only began with the fall; rather, I would propose that it began before creation.

I also disagree with the authors' proposal to limit the meaning of "mission" to "restoration." To define "mission" only as "restoration" is to limit its real scope as portrayed in the Bible. Bartholomew and Goheen, moved by the strong conviction that humans should be good stewards of the earth and its resources, repeatedly claim that God's final goal for the earth is not destruction and re-creation, but restoration. They attribute the same intention to God in the flood story. However, what about those passages that speak about destruction and re-creation, both in regard to the flood and the end of history? The prophets frequently talk about what is expected to happen after the restoration of "the Day of the Lord" and describe God's people bringing glory to him for eternity as their true and ongoing mission. Further, Scripture portrays a complete destruction of the earth before a new creation is inaugurated.

The authors' second goal is to help students articulate a "thoroughly biblical worldview" (11). However, this statement raises many questions: Is there a "biblical" worldview? Since the Bible was written over a 1,600-year span by a number of authors, how can one be sure they all shared the same worldview? If there is one biblical worldview, why do Bartholomew and Goheen use a two-pronged approach in which they label the OT as "covenant" and the NT as "kingdom of God"? Although Bartholomew and Goheen do a wonderful job in emphasizing the progression of the story and the continuity of themes in Scripture, it seems strange that they introduce different approaches for each of the Testaments. Further, do individual worldviews affect how the Scriptures are read? All branches of Christianity claim that their particular views espouse the "biblical" worldview. Which one is correct? Although I appreciate Bartholomew and Goheen's efforts to recreate the panoramic vision of the biblical story and to rediscover its larger context, I find their goal to create a thoroughly biblical worldview overstated. However, the task of reconstructing biblical theology from a missiological perspective has the potential to unite us, in spite of our different worldviews, and is, therefore, a worthy, though difficult, project.

In spite of occasional inconsistencies, *The Drama of Scripture* presents a sound perspective and a coherent story. It combines an introductory style to biblical theology with commentary, theological insights, and invitations to engagement. Its style is simple, with good Scripture and Subject indices. The endnotes provide additional interesting and helpful information. It would serve well not only as a textbook for college-level students, but also for laypeople and theologians who are interested in refreshing their perspectives on God's history and plans for humanity.

For those interested in further study, Bartholomew and Goheen have created a website (www.biblicaltheology.ca), which contains PowerPoint presentations for each chapter, reading schedules, supplementary reading, and more. I recommend *The Drama of Scripture* as an excellent addition to a missiologist's or theologian's library.

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CRISTIAN DUMITRESCU

Ego, Beate, Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Kristin De Troyer, eds. *Minor Prophets*, vol. 3B, *Biblia Qumranica*. Leiden: Brill, 2005. xxiv + 195 pp. Hardcover, \$120.00.

The *Biblia Qumranica* series presents a columnar synopsis of the biblical manuscripts discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS). Prepared by an international array of Qumran scholars, the synopsis project encompasses not only the Hebrew, Greek, and