

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. 174 pp. Paper, \$16.99.

During a long and honored teaching career, Walter Kaiser published more than thirty books, including *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (2000) and *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* (2001). Currently, he is President Emeritus and Colman Mockler Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. With this volume, he presents the theological academy and Christian church with another welcome volume. In a day when Christianity is often reduced to contentless “spirituality,” and Christian thinking about the great God of heaven and earth is reduced to trite categories of human reflections, the book is refreshing.

Kaiser adeptly handles the intricacies of the OT, working with the profound richness embedded in the Hebrew language that is often lost in translation, making the book a valuable resource for OT scholars. However, even those whose study of these languages is tenuous or even nonexistent will find the book a fertile source for material on OT perspectives about God. In defense of his project, he notes:

Remember, it was the apostle Paul who reminded Timothy—who had access at that time only to the first thirty-nine books of the Bible (i.e. the Old Testament)—that “all Scripture is . . . profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16 KJV). Not only could the Old Testament be God’s instrument through which individuals could be saved (“the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” v. 15), but those same texts also could bring “teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (vv. 16-17). . . . It is in this light, then, that we dare to announce with great boldness and fervor the teaching of the Old Testament on the supremacy and majesty of our incomparably great God, who exceeds every boundary and limitation known to any and all mortals (20-21).

Kaiser gives forceful attention to the revelation of God in the OT—God’s initial disclosure of himself. His purpose and method is “to give God’s people new insight . . . by reviewing ten outstanding Old Testament texts that set forth the majesty of our Lord. Each chapter begins by exploring a key concept, an important term, an archaeological background, or a word study that will enhance our appreciation for the text under review and add to the depth of our study and teaching” (9). The following ten chapters then attempt to fulfill this purpose by magnifying the aspect of God most central to each passage: God’s incomparability (Isa 40:9-31), greatness (Dan 4:1-37), Word (Num 20:1-3), wonderful name (Jer 32:1-44), pardoning grace (Micah 7:11-20), Holy Spirit (Zec 4:1-14), awesome character (Ps 139:1-18), glory (Eze 1:1-28), grace of giving (1 Chron 29:6-19), and holiness (Isa 6:1-13).

There are a few issues of interpretation one could take disagreement with. For example, Kaiser suggests that the plural “us” in Isa 6 is “the plural of majesty or royalty” (152). However, more current thinking on this

phenomenon points to the fact that the ancient Hebrew language does not manifest that particular usage. I also find his explanation of God's "coming down" at Babel (Gen 11:5-7) and the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:2) somewhat lacking. He notes that these events are "best understood as anthropomorphic language that stresses the focusing of the divine intention on a special act" (110). While this may be true, there may also be more involved.

Issues such as I pointed out above, however, are minor. Pastors, teachers, and others seeking a rich study on the majesty of God will be amply rewarded by reading this book.

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Klingbeil, Gerald A. *Bridging the Gap: Ritual and Ritual Texts in the Bible*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007. xiv + 304 pp. Hardcover, \$37.53.

Gerald Klingbeil's *Bridging the Gap* is a courageous first attempt at comprehensively presenting the interface between study of biblical rituals and a wide variety of disciplines, especially including social sciences and ritual theory. Given the complexity of ritual and the wide range of approaches to this phenomenon, his task is a daunting one.

Following Klingbeil's Introduction in chapter 1, chapter 2 introduces and defines basic concepts and terms, chapter 3 provides a social-science perspective of ritual, and chapter 4 introduces the study of biblical ritual texts, including problems involved in their interpretation. Chapter 5 presents a unique and informative history of interpretation of biblical rituals and ritual texts, beginning with critique of ritual by the Hebrew prophets and continuing with interpretations of ritual in Second Temple period Judaism, early Christianity, medieval Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, theological thought after the French revolution, and the modern and postmodern age, with particular focus on evangelicalism. Chapter 6 outlines a strategy for reading ritual, and situations that can trigger the need for rituals. Chapters 7 and 8 demonstrate analysis of rituals in light of important ritual elements. Chapter 9 describes the polyvalence of ritual by looking at various dimensions and functions of ritual. Chapter 10 connects ritual study to other areas of biblical and theological research, and chapter 11 provides a brief summary with concluding comments. An appendix, which attempts to comprehensively list pentateuchal ritual texts and to categorize them in terms of his methodology, is followed by a bibliography and indices of authors, Scripture, and other ancient sources.

Aside from interacting with scholars of biblical ritual, Klingbeil aims to "introduce university and seminary students to the neglected field of ritual studies within the larger context of biblical and theological studies" (1). This implies the function of an introductory textbook. Indeed, the volume has several characteristics of a successful textbook, such as comprehensive scope; definitions of concepts; diagrams; summaries at the ends of chapters; writing that is often engaging; abundant references to resources for further study; historical reviews of relevant literature, containing many instructive critiques