

*Job*, by Gerald H. Wilson. NIBCOT. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007. Pp. vi + 494. ISBN 978-1-56563-219-6. Paper. US\$16.95.

In this commentary Wilson attempts to explore the literary and spiritual terrain of the book of Job. He tries to bridge the hermeneutical gap between the ancient texts and their contemporary reader. This commentary is based on the NIV translation and presents careful section-by-section exposition. A separate section of notes at the close of each section's exposition plays a significant role in understanding the text of Job. Wilson claims to bypass several popular approaches to biblical interpretation. He does not follow the pre-critical approach which ignores recent scholarly conversations. He also does not use an anti-critical approach which tends "to defend the Bible against the detractors, especially scholarly ones" (p. xii). Wilson finds the critical approach deficient as well, in that it endeavors to understand "the text apart from the meaning it conveys. Though modern readers have been taught to be discerning, they do not want to live in the 'desert of criticism'" (p. xii). Instead, he follows a "believing criticism" approach which, according to him, clings to probing and reflective interpretation of the text with devotion and affection (p. xii). The believing criticism approach uses critical method to communicate the message of the biblical text to the modern readers in order to strengthen their faith. Wilson is very much aware of the recent approaches which are being used to interpret the biblical text of the book of Job. Therefore, he clearly mentions the approach which he uses to interpret the text of Job, in order to convey an understandable message to both general readers and serious students. The author holds the biblical text in highest regard and is committed to the Bible's full authority.

Pages 1–16 contain an introductory section, which discusses, as expected, the title, date, general wisdom context, text, structure, and purpose of the book of Job. Pages 17–477 contain the commentary on the text of the book of Job, which is followed by the writer's suggestion for further reading on the book of Job (p. 479). Pages 481–94 contain subject and Scripture indexes which are also helpful tools in locating intertextual links within the Hebrew Bible.

In his commentary on the text, Wilson states that "[Job's] test in no way benefits either God or Job—who both know and affirm Job's righteousness—nor does it benefit the Satan, who passes immediately from the scene at the end of 2:7. Rather, the test is solely for the reader, who alone is left wondering if it is possible to fear God for nothing" (p. 24). To some extent Wilson is correct that the test of Job was not a business deal involving profit or loss. However, it seems that he misses seeing that the test of Job does highlight the rewards and gracious benefits with which the righteous person is blessed if he or she is an obedient and a faithful follower of YHWH

(e.g., the blessings which Job received at the end of his trial [Job 42:10]). The test of Job was also beneficial for Job's friends, who after Job's test were enlightened by new insights into the concept of suffering (Job 42:7–9). Job's experience taught them that not only sinners suffer in this sinful world but that the righteous suffer as well.

The statement made by Wilson on p. 30 that "it is God who carries out Job's test in the extreme terms" leaves the reader of this commentary wondering whether God is the author of pain and suffering. It seems fitting, in my opinion, to say that it was not God who carried out the extreme test of Job, but he allowed it to happen (p. 31). The author is Satan, who is always ready to devour the people of God (1 Pet 5:8).

In this commentary the author has tactfully addressed some of the difficult topics in the book of Job. The following exemplary texts are supplied to spotlight the fact that the writer of this commentary has dealt with many crucial texts of such nature. The discussions he includes are scholarly, highlighting contemporary solutions, and providing new perspectives on the many textual intricacies of the book of Job.

Due to my own research interest I will review Wilson's discussion of Job 14:22 and 19:25–26. Job 14:22 has puzzled the scholarly world. Some have given up on this text, whereas others have suggested that this text refers to the mourning and painful experience of the dead in the grave (see Marvin Pope, *Job* [AB 15; New York: Doubleday, 1965], 111). However, Wilson's suggestion that the continuous mourning and the painful experience of the dead in the grave would undermine Job's desire to escape suffering in death (p. 158), is more fitting and is in harmony with the overall context of the book of Job.

The key issue in Job 19:25–26 is to identify the גֹּאֵל "redeemer" and to understand the word-cluster וּמִבְּשָׁרִי "and from my flesh." Wilson presents two leading interpretations which attempt to identify גֹּאֵל. The first interpretation considers Job's words engraved in rock to be a גֹּאֵל for Job (19:24). Job's words will remain engraved even after his death "to plead his case in a sort of continuing public vindication" (p. 208). The second interpretation considers that גֹּאֵל refers to God. Job sees God as his גֹּאֵל, who will free him from the suffering which he is going through. Wilson opts for the second option (p. 208). I suggest (cf. Younis Misah, "Does Job 14:22 Depict the Condition of Man after Death or the Condition of Job while He is Alive?" [M.A. in Religion thesis, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2007]) that perhaps גֹּאֵל in v. 25 may first have a Messianic point of reference and, second, an eschatological reference to Christ's second coming when he will complete the work of redemption (וְאֶחָדָּן יִקָּוֶה עַל-יַעֲקֹב "and at the end he will stand upon the earth" (v. 25b). Hence, it seems that Wilson perhaps needs to see the implications of v. 25 both in its

needs to see the implications of v. 25 both in its immediate and broader context and that he may have to revise his conclusions in view of the textual evidence which v. 25 provides.

Obviously, the profound and thorough information provided in this commentary cannot be fully appreciated in such a short book review. However, it appears to the present reviewer that Wilson's commentary on the book of Job provides a helpful tool for those who wish to discover the treasures of biblical knowledge found in the book of Job. This commentary is truly a work which deserves broad attention from those working in the field of Old Testament studies. Its depth and rigor should merit a serious response from critical scholarship. Students and teachers of Joban studies in particular cannot afford to be ignorant of this work and its challenging conclusions. It is a great resource not only for scholars but also for pastors. Despite the fact that some texts should have been explained in more detail and the desirability of a literal translation of the Hebrew text of Job in the section-by-section exposition, I heartily recommend this commentary for all who have a passion for increasing their knowledge of Old Testament poetry and specifically of the book of Job.

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