

Commentaries and Biblical Resources

Paper, Electronic, and On Line
Resources for Preaching

General Principles

- 1. A Commentary is a book written to answer questions you are not asking.
- 2. Therefore, you need to know what kinds of questions different commentaries answer.
- 3. No commentary set is of equal quality in all the books.
- 4. So, to get the best commentaries on each book of the Bible you must choose volumes from many sets.

A Most True General Principle

- Commentaries are like Saul's armor. They must fit you. Just because your friend, teacher, or favorite scholar likes a commentary does not mean it will work well for you. Before making BIG purchases, you should get a copy of that commentary or set in your hand to look at it long enough to decide if it will work for you.

Technical Commentaries

- Commentaries that deal especially with the Hebrew and/or Greek Texts:
- Hermeneia
- International Critical Commentary
- New International Greek Testament Commentary
- Word Biblical Commentary
- Forms of the OT Literature

Technical Commentary - Hermeneia



Technical Commentary - Hermeneia

- Generally, volumes are translations of liberal, German Protestant mid 20th century scholarship
- Uneven quality
- 7 of the 38 volumes currently available deal with Apocryphal, Pseudepigraphical, or early Church Fathers
- Best volumes – Betz on Galatians and Ulrich Luz on Matthew (3 vols.)

Technical Commentary - Hermeneia

20/ and, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and, what I now live in [the] flesh I live in [the] faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.

21/ I do not nullify the grace of God. For [only] if justification [came] through [the] Law has Christ died in vain.

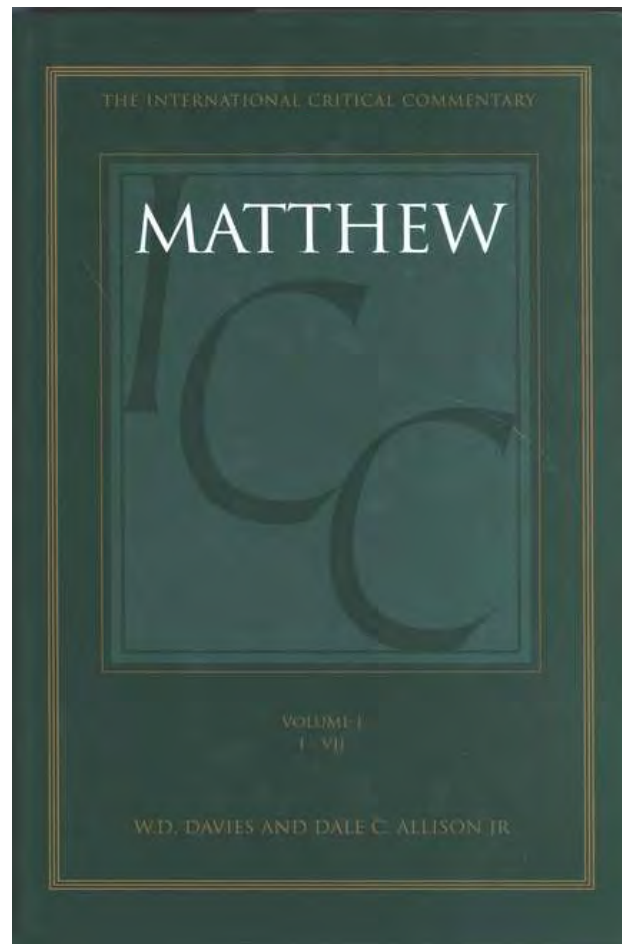
Analysis

Since antiquity the question has been discussed whether Paul's account of the episode at Antioch ends with 2:14, or whether it includes 2:15–21 as a summary of the speech he made at Antioch.⁶ Those who assume that 2:14–21 is a restatement of what Paul had said to Cephas and the church at Antioch have also discussed the question whether it is historically accurate, a summary, a free paraphrase, or simply an invention for rhetorical purposes. Otto Bauernfeind⁷ called attention to the need to consider the literary form, which he thought was that of a “report about a speech” (“*Redereferat*”). In present New Testament scholarship the whole question is unresolved. Most scholars take a middle position, saying that Paul addresses Cephas formally, and the Galatians materially.

Between the *narratio* and the *probatio* ancient rhetoricians insert the *propositio* (the name Quintilian uses). Quintilian has the fullest account of this part of the speech, but again he takes a special position in applying it. We find the general view in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and in Cicero's *De inventione*, although there is also considerable difference between them. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* provides for two kinds of statements after the *narratio*: “the division of the cause falls into two parts. When the statement of facts has been brought to an end, we ought first to make clear what we and our opponents agree upon, if there is agreement on the points useful to us, and what remains contested . . .” Then comes the *distributio* in two parts, the *enumeratio* and the *expositio*, the former announcing the number of points to be discussed, the latter setting forth these points briefly and completely. The function of the *propositio* is two-fold: it sums up the legal content of the *narratio* by this outline of the case and provides an easy transition to the *probatio*.

Gal 2:15–21 conforms to the form, function, and requirements of the *propositio*. Placed at the end of the last episode of the *narratio* (2:11–14), it sums up the *narratio*'s material content. But it is not part of the *narratio*, and it sets up the arguments to be discussed later in the *probatio* (chapters 3 and 4). The points of presumed agreement are set forth first (2:15–16). This passage is a summary of the doctrine of justification by faith.

Technical Commentary – International Critical Commentary



Technical Commentary – International Critical Commentary

- Series began over 100 years ago and most volumes are 80 to 110 years old
- New start in 1975
- Historical-critical and philological approach
- Older volumes weak in theology and literary
- Best volumes – Cranfield – Romans, Barrett – Acts, Best – Ephesians, Marshall – Pastoral Epistles, Davies and Allison – Matthew 3 vols

Technical Commentary – International Critical Commentary

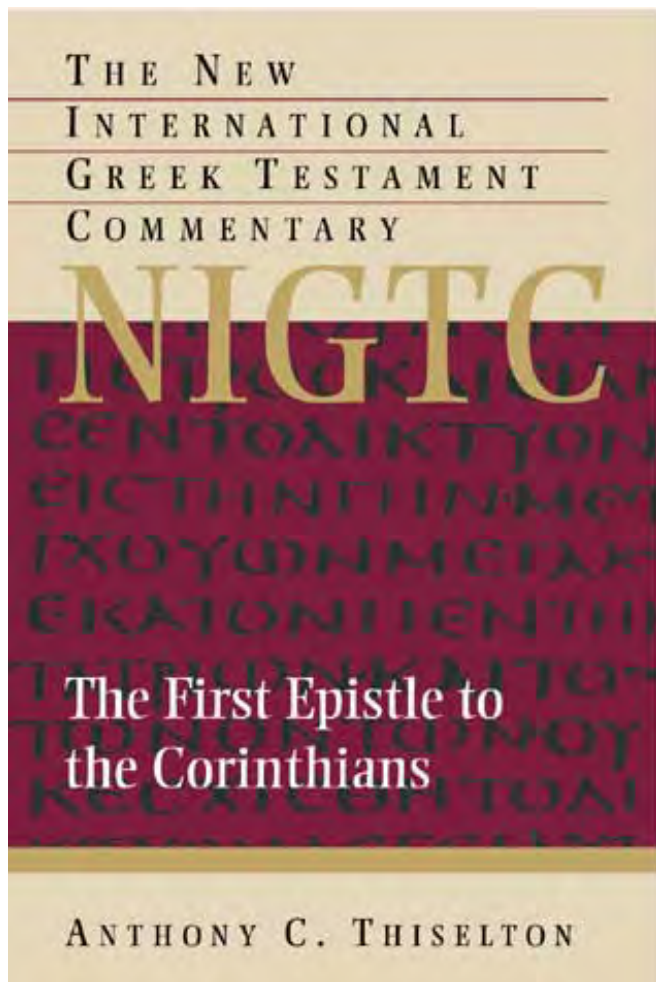
16. Although it is possible we should suppose some influence from Q (see below), Matthew now returns to his Markan source in reciting the goal and *raison d'être* of chapter 3.

βαπτισθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς. Mark has, 'And he was baptized in the Jordan by John'. Jesus again is named (contrast Mark) because the subject of the preceding sentence is John the Baptist ('Then he permitted him'). Introductory aorist participles are common in the First Gospel, and Matthew names Jesus more often than his fellow synoptic evangelists (Mt:150; Mk:81; Lk:89).

ἀνέβη εὐθύς ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος. Compare Acts 8:39; Barn. 11:8, 11; Herm. s. 9:16. Mark's present participle (ἀναβαίνων) has become an aorist in accordance with the introductory βαπτισθεὶς, and his ἐκ has become ἀπό (an apparently insignificant change also made in 14:2 = Mk 6:14; 21:8 = Mk 11:8; 24:1 = Mk 13:1; and 24:29 = Mk 13:25; cf. the textual variants in Mt 7:4; 17:9; Mk 16:3). For water as the site of revelation see Ezek 1:1; Dan 8:2; 10:4; 1 En. 13:7–8; *Mek. on Exod 12:1*; *3 Bar. title*; see also Davies, *JPS*, p. 76.

In Mark εὐθύς goes with εἶδεν; here it goes with ἀνέβη. Matthew has usually dropped the word (Mt:7; Mk:42; Lk:1) and retains it only for temporal expression whereas Mark frequently employs it as though it were the equivalent of καὶ ἰδοῦ. In the present instance Matthew's usage makes little sense: 'Jesus at once came out of the water; and behold, the heavens opened ...'. Why would anyone ever *stay in the water*? But Mark is intelligible: 'he was baptized in the Jordan by John. And immediately, having come out of the water, he saw the heavens rent ...'. Because it is Mark's habit to write sentences with the form, εὐθύς + participle + verb qualified by εὐθύς (e.g. 1:18; 2:8; 11:2; 14:43), we must suspect Matthew of being secondary. In rewriting his source he has erroneously joined the adverb to the wrong verb.

Technical Commentary – New International Greek Testament Commentary



- New Testament only – not complete (13 volumes covering 17 of 27 books of NT)
- Generally conservative, Reformed perspective
- Uneven quality of engagement with the Greek text and with theological issues
- Lots of good information but needs reshaping for preaching

New International Greek Testament Commentary

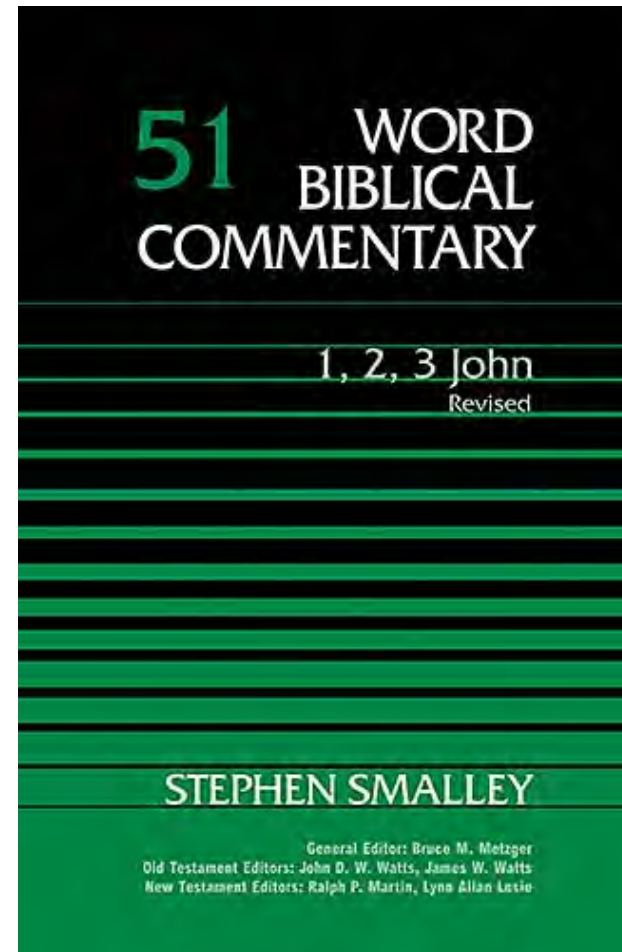
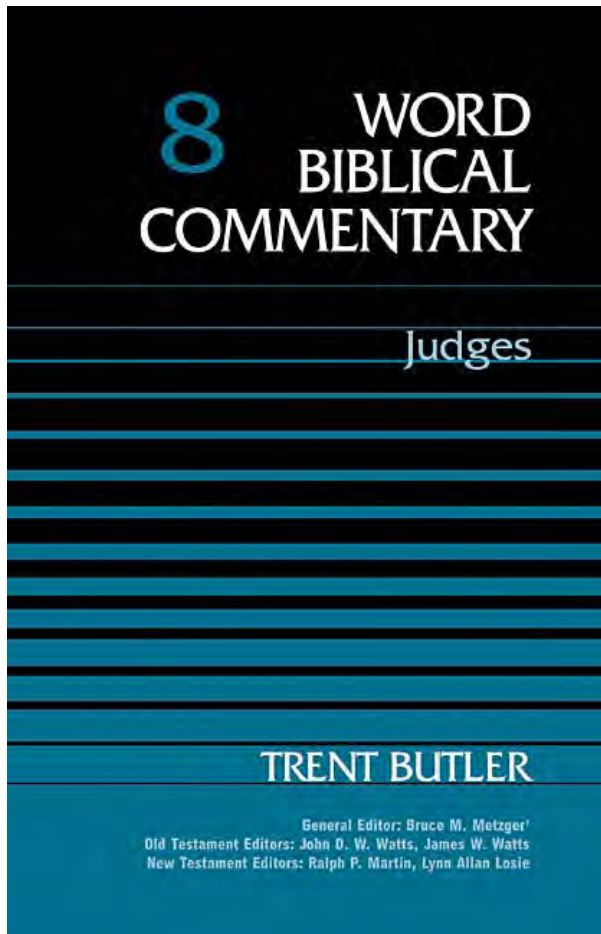
1:1 The total lack of definite articles, along with the absence of any verb, helps to suggest that we have here a superscription or heading. The scope of the text covered by the heading is signalled by the repetition in v. 17 (in reverse order) of the key terms ‘Abraham’, ‘David’, and ‘Christ’ (though indirectly this should be extended to cover vv. 18–25 since these verses are, structurally, an expansion and explanation of v. 16). It is likely that some influence on the wording has come from Mk. 1:1. If this is so, Matthew has deliberately chosen to trace the roots of his story further back than Mark had considered necessary (but not as far as Luke or John).

βίβλος is the normal word for ‘book’, and this fact has caused some interpreters to apply it here to the whole of the Gospel text. At least in Septuagintal Greek, however, it can also refer to a less substantial piece of writing, either a document in its own right or included within a larger whole.⁵ It is considerably more natural (given the link here with ‘origin’) to apply βίβλος to the genealogy bracketed by vv. 1 and 17.

γένεσις (‘origin’) is used here and in v. 18 and must be taken in a manner which can do justice to the link between these two uses.

Many have been struck by the use in the LXX of Gn. 2:4; 5:1 of the identical phrase βίβλος γενέσεως (but with the definite article). In the underlying Hebrew the phrase refers in 2:4 (‘... of the heavens and the earth when they were created’) to 2:5–4:26, spanning from the creation of Adam to the birth of a son to Seth; the use in 5:1 (‘... of Adam’) probably covers the genealogy of 5:1–32 with the appended material in 6:1–8. The Hebrew has *twldt*, which, fittingly, points in the direction of where things are going (derived from the verb *yld*, meaning ‘to bear’, it has traditionally been translated ‘generations’), but the Greek γένεσις points rather in the direction of origins. Almost certainly this indicates that the translator took the reference, not unreasonably but erroneously, as to the preceding materials.

Technical Commentary – Word Biblical Commentary



Technical Commentary – Word Biblical Commentary

- Interacts with the Hebrew and Greek texts, but always provides translation
- Represents an enlightened evangelical perspective and includes a range of denominational representatives
- Almost complete
- Explanation section often deals with theology
- Most useful technical commentary for preachers

Technical Commentary – Word Biblical Commentary

Inadvertent Offenses (15:22–31)

Bibliography

Kellermann, D. "Bemerkungen zum Sündopfergesetz in Num. 14:22ff." ed; H. Gese. *Festschrift für K. Elliger*. Neukirchen: Keuelaer, 1973, 107–14. Toeg, A. "כב־לא־מרש הלכה: במדבר טו." An Halakhic Midrash in Num 15: 22–31." *Tarbiz* 43 (1973) 1–20.

Translation

²²But if you err, and do not observe all these commandments which Yahweh has spoken to Moses, ²³all that Yahweh has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that Yahweh commanded, and onward throughout your generations, ²⁴then if it was done inadvertently^a without the knowledge of the congregation, all the congregation shall offer one young bull for a whole offering, a soothing odor to Yahweh, with its cereal offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat for a purification offering. ²⁵And the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the people of Israel. And they shall be forgiven because it was an error, and they have brought their offering, an offering by fire to Yahweh, and their purification offering before Yahweh, for their error. ²⁶And all the congregation of the people of Israel shall be forgiven, and the resident alien with them, because the whole population was involved in the error.

²⁷If one person sins inadvertently, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a purification offering. ²⁸And the priest shall make atonement before Yahweh for the person who commits an error, when he sins inadvertently, to make atonement for him. And he shall be forgiven. ²⁹You shall have one law for him who does anything inadvertently, for him who is native among the people of Israel, and for the resident alien with them. ³⁰But the person who does anything with deliberate defiance, whether he is native or an alien, reviles Yahweh,^a and that person shall be cut off from among his people.^b ³¹Because he has despised the word of Yahweh, and has broken his commandment,^a that person shall be utterly cut off. His guilt shall be on him."

Notes

24.a. לְשֹׁגְגָה "inadvertently." The form is usually בְּשֹׁגְגָה, as in vv 27, 29; Lev 4:22.

30.a. G reads "God" here.

30.b. Sam. reads the plural noun (cf: Gen 17:14; Exod 31:14; Lev 7:20–21; Num 9:13).

31.a. The plural is more usual in such contexts, as in Sam., G, Syr. and Tg.

Form/Structure/Setting

The priestliness of the material is universally recognized among analysts. Though its present position in Num 15 is widely believed to be relatively late the substance of the law itself is often considered to belong to

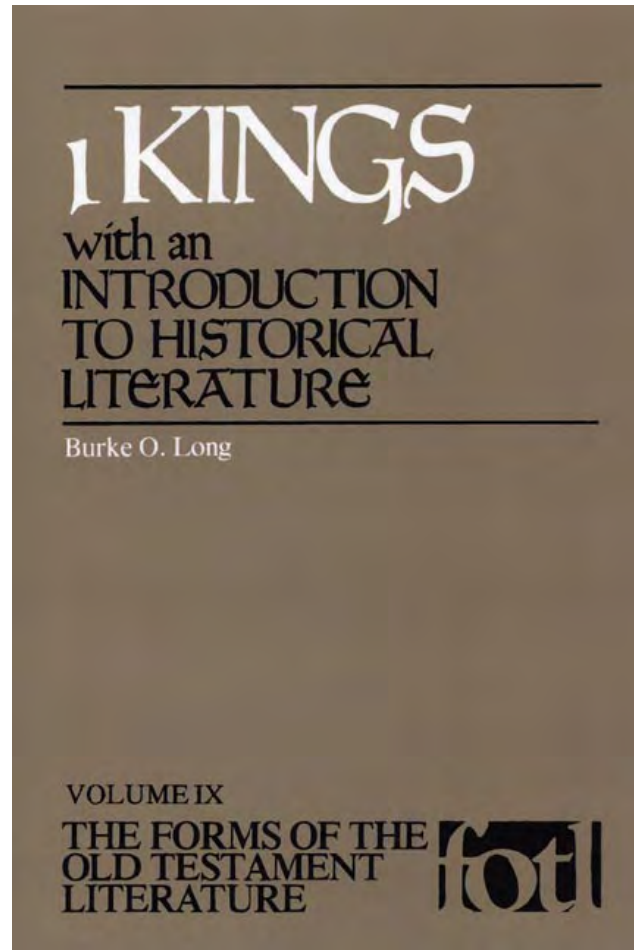
Comment

1 As noted above (*Form/Structure/Setting* on 19:16–25), this verse and all that follows it through v 21 is best read in direct sequence to 19:19a, so: "The sound of the ram's horn meanwhile was moving, and growing very strong. Then God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am Yahweh, your God....'" The people, duly prepared, have been brought by Moses to the place appointed for them at the bottom of Sinai, amidst the sounds and sights of Yahweh's impending Advent. This accompaniment to Yahweh's coming is pierced from time to time by the sound of an amplified ram's horn, which is nearer and louder with each successive signal. Then, when the sounding of the ram's horn has reached its most intense level, Yahweh speaks, addressing all the people assembled at the perimeter of holiness around the mountain's base.

Explanation

Whatever the time origin of the Decalogue, and whatever the *Ur*-form of the individual commandments that make it up, whatever the provenance of the "ten words" in Israel's worship and in Israel's legal practice, this most influential of all law codes must be seen in Exodus as the center of the narrative that is at the very heart of the OT. By location as by content, the Decalogue is set forth in Exodus as the single address of Yahweh himself directly to his people, stating the fundamental principles for living in relationship with him. It is possible that the Exodus setting of the Decalogue may give us information not only about the covenant community's belief concerning the origin and the authority of the commandments, but also about the biblical interrelation of revelation and law and the biblical view of law as liberation. If this is even partially true, we should take the Exodus location of the commandments far more seriously than we have done.

Technical Commentary – The Forms of the OT Literature



Technical Commentary – The Forms of the OT Literature

- 17 volumes covering 28 of the OT books (Exodus and Isaiah are not complete)
- Attempts a form-critical analysis of every book and each unit in the Hebrew Bible
- Its purpose is exegetical through analysis of structure, genre, setting and intention
- Uneven quality
- Difficult to use homiletically

Academic Commentaries

- Commentaries that deal at a technical level with historical and critical issues, but do not assume ability in Hebrew and Greek:
- Baker Exegetical Commentary
- Continental Commentary
- Old Testament Library/New Testament Library
- New International Commentary on the New Testament
- New International Commentary on the Old Testament
- Sacra Pagina
- Tyndale Old and New Testament Commentaries

Academic Commentary – Baker Exegetical Commentary on NT

- Presently 15 volumes covering 17 of the 27 books of the New Testament
- Enlightened conservative scholarship, usually Reformed perspective
- Engages the Greek text with careful scholarship
- Strong on historical, grammatical analysis
- No corresponding Old Testament series

Academic Commentary – Continental Commentary

- 19 volumes covering 15 of the 66 books of the Bible (3 volumes each on Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah)
- More coverage of the Old Testament – only Galatians and Revelation are published now in New Testament
- Uncertain whether this series will continue
- Westermann's work on Genesis has "preachable" material

Academic Commentary – Old Testament and New Testament Library

- OT Library began publication in the 1960's but is now complete. Several OT books have more than one commentary still in publication (e.g. Deuteronomy – a volume by von Rad and a volume by Nelson)
- Older volumes focused on history and Biblical Theology; newer volumes more on literature and theology

Academic Commentary – Old Testament and New Testament Library

- Exodus and Isaiah by Brevard Childs are excellent resources for Christian preaching
- New Testament Library began publication in 2002 and now has 9 volumes covering 14 of the 27 NT books
- NT Library represents a more consistently theological orientation than OT Library
- Both sets contain other helpful (non-commentary) volumes

Academic Commentary – New International Commentary on the New Testament

- NICNT began publication in the 1950's – 18 volumes covering all the NT except 2 Peter and Jude are now available – several replacement volumes
- Over the past 50 years NICNT has become more mainstream Evangelical (instead of conservative, Reformed) in perspective
- Greek is dealt with in footnotes only
- Uneven quality, but some excellent vols.

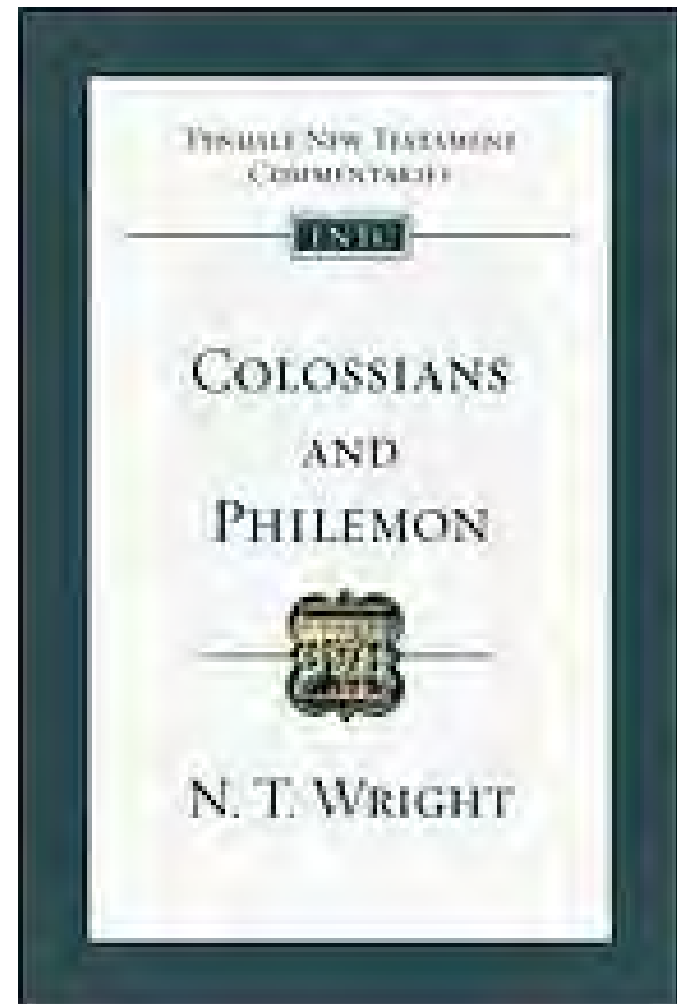
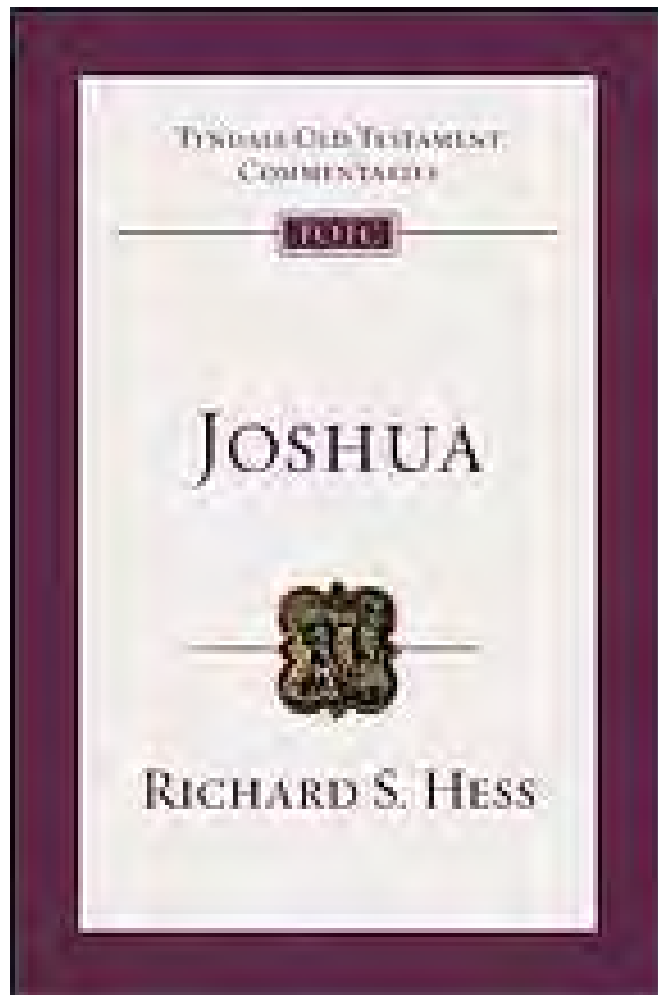
Academic Commentary – New International Commentary on the Old Testament

- NICOT began publication in 1976 and now has 22 volumes covering 25 of the 39 OT books
- Conservative evangelical in tone there are many excellent commentaries in this set
- Some tendency to favor historical interests over literary and theological, but that is not consistent
- Little help for moving from text to sermon

Academic Commentary – *Sacra Pagina*

- *Sacra Pagina* is an 18 volume commentary on the New Testament with all books covered
- It is written by Roman Catholic scholars and published by the Catholic Liturgical Press
- It represents the mature fruit of Catholic biblical scholarship since Vatican II
- It engages the text critically, but with an eye to the theological and religious significance
- Some volumes are quite helpful for preaching

Academic Commentaries – Tyndale OT and NT Commentary



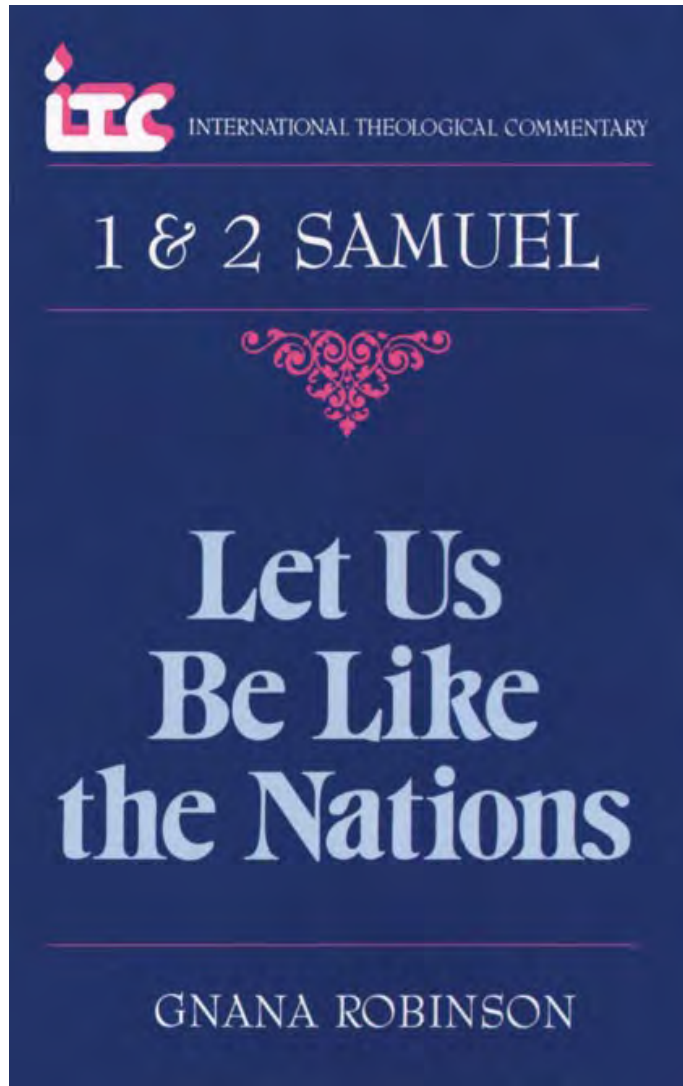
Academic Commentaries – Tyndale OT and NT Commentary

- 28 volumes on the OT and 20 volumes on the NT covering all the canonical books
- Somewhat smaller, paper-back books – the biblical text is not printed
- Most bang for your buck
- Older volumes focus on historical matters, newer volumes more on literary and theological
- Evangelical, usually Reformed perspective

Theological Commentaries

- Commentaries that give primary attention to theological issues
- International Theological Commentary (OT)
- Two Horizons Commentary
- Brazos Theological Commentary

International Theological Commentary



Theological Commentaries – International Theological Commentary

- 26 volumes covering all the OT except Joshua, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and Psalms
- Written by authors from all over the world
- Uneven quality and inconsistent theological perspective
- Focused on theological themes and the application of the text for today

International Theological Commentary

21:1-34

The narrative that began in 11:30 and 12:1-3 now comes to complex closure, centering in turn on Sarah (21:1-7), Hagar (vv. 8-21), Abimelech (vv. 22-32), and finally on Abraham (vv. 33-34). In the first three episodes Abraham is an auxiliary. In the last episode the narrator focuses on him alone, taking up motifs introduced in 12:6-8.

21:1-7 The opening lines, virtually poetic in their repetitiveness, reinforce the sense of satisfactory closure: “visited ... as he had said;/did ... as he had promised.” In Isa. 40-55 God is First and Last, Beginning and End, One who promises and fulfills (cf. Rev. 1:8). The “oneness” of God (Deut. 6:4) is spelled out in Deuteronomy frequently in reference to the promises made to the ancestors and soon to be made good in the entry into the land. Strikingly, the opening lines here in Gen. 21 speak of God visiting Sarah and doing to Sarah as promised. This underscores her centrality in the story, made explicit in 17:19, 21; 18:9-15, and now in retrospect implicit already in 12:1-3.

The son nevertheless is born “to Abraham,” who names him “Isaac” and circumcises (*mul*) him. This child is the fulfillment of both Sarah’s and Abraham’s stories as individuals. Or rather, as the unifying focus of their initially separate laughters (17:17; 18:12), Isaac is the sign in which their individual stories become individual strands in one communal story. Thus, whereas in Exod. 2:22 Moses both names his son and gives the meaning of the name, here Abraham does the naming (as in Gen. 16:15) and Sarah gives the meaning: “God has made laughter for me.” Her laughter had begun in ironic disbelief and doubt. Yet even there, the laughter had opened up a space within her settled despair. Now the laughter becomes a different kind of disbelief, as when one disbelieves for joy (cf. Luke 24:41) at something too good to be true which nevertheless has come true. The dream-like character of the experience is captured in Ps. 126, with its movement from weeping to laughter. These two contrasting moods or modes of human existence mark the depths and the heights of the Psalter, the gravity of lament and the levity of praise. These contrasting moods also mark the journey from Exod. 2:23-25 to 15:1-18. Israel’s foundational hymn of praise in Exod. 15:1-18, responding to Miriam’s call to praise in 15:20-21, has its anticipation and root in Sarah’s “God has given me laughter.” In opening her womb Isaac has opened her soul to praise.

“Every one who hears will laugh with me” (Gen. 21:6). The laughter is hers, but not hers alone. Her laughter should cause joy in all who hear it (cf. Rom. 12:15). How wide is the circle of that joy? With Gen. 12:3b in mind (and cf. Ps. 126:2), we may suppose the circle to be as wide as human celebration can make it. For the moment, Sarah’s soul opens to embrace all who will laugh with her.

“Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children?” (Gen. 21:7). There is a verbal play here between “said” (Heb. *millel*) and “circumcised” (*mul*, v. 4; also *malal*). The play

21:8-21 Until he is weaned, Isaac knows his mother as the primary horizon of his life. His weaning feast marks his move into a wider circle. Within that wider circle, Sarah sees “the son of Hagar” (never named in this passage) “playing (*metsaheq*) with her son Isaac (*yitshaq*)” (restoring the last phrase with the help of the Greek). Oblivious as children will be to the complex histories and agendas of their parents, these two boys explore the delights of interaction in a world whose boundaries are as yet open horizons rather than borders guarded and controlled by settled adult opinion, proven adult knowledge, and narrowly purposed adult goals. For the boys, those boundaries are a - threshold across which daily they move into wider regions of possibility through discoveries marked by laughter. That laughter is in fact the widening circle of Sarah’s earlier laughter, the widening circle of the play of God with the creation. In their laughter, wisdom is justified by her children (Matt. 11:19, RSV mg).

Sarah does not see it that way. With an adult wisdom defined by clan experience, tradition, and observation, she sees Hagar’s son as an alien threat standing inside the circle of her family’s laughter. Is God’s promise to her (Gen. 17 and 18) not enough for her? Is Abraham’s commitment to the child of that promise not enough for her? Is it that Sarah feels she must act in concert with God and Abraham to secure the future of the promise? Or is she settling an old score? Her motives, however mixed, converge to expel Hagar’s son from the circle of her laughter.

Theological Commentaries – Two Horizons Commentary



THE TWO HORIZONS
OLD TESTAMENT
COMMENTARY

Genesis
James McKeown



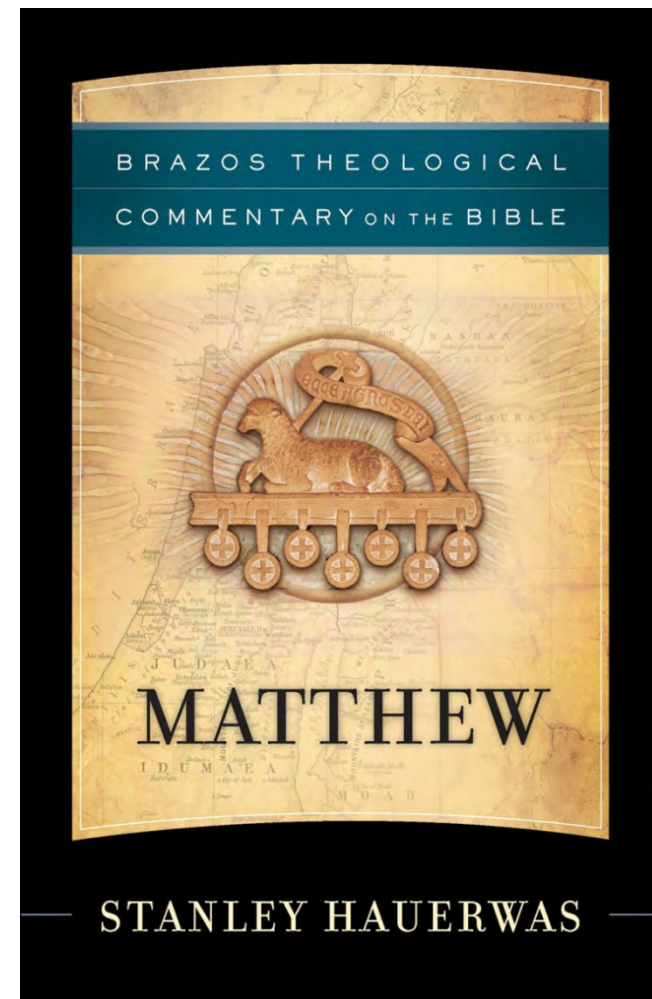
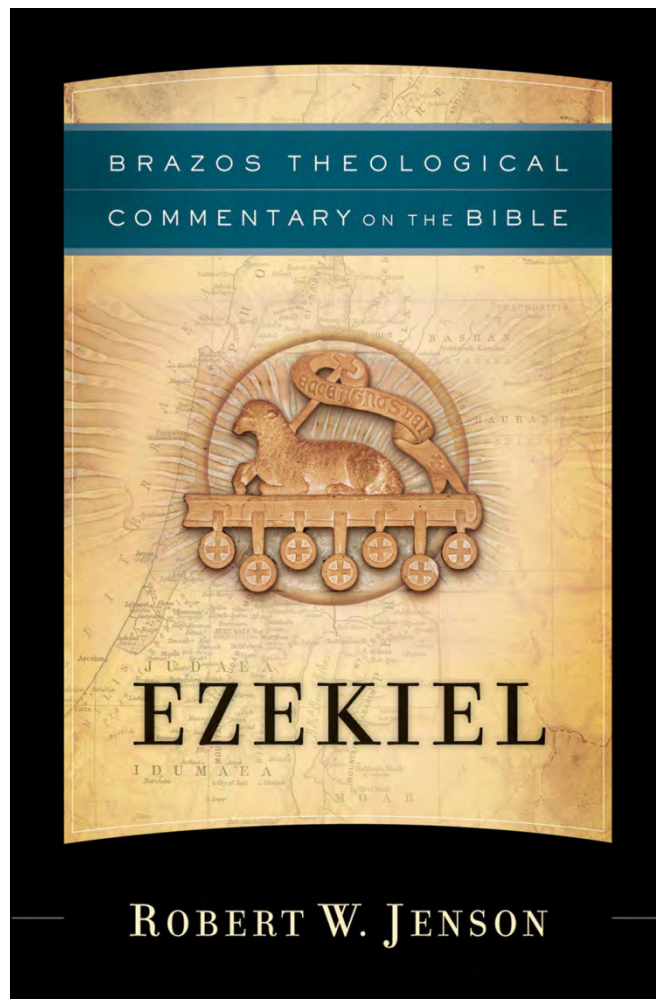
THE TWO HORIZONS
NEW TESTAMENT
COMMENTARY

1 Peter
Joel B. Green

Theological Commentaries – Two Horizons Commentary

- 4 volumes of OT (Gen, Josh, Lament, Pss) and 4 volumes of NT (1 Pet, 2 Pet and Jude, Col and Philemon, Phil) are available
- Attempts to bridge the gap between biblical studies and systematic theology
- Represents the theological interpretation of Scripture movement of recent years
- Volumes thus far have been very helpful

Theological Commentary – The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible



Theological Commentary – The Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible

- 11 volumes covering 14 books of the OT and 5 volumes covering 10 books of the NT are now available
- The authors are systematic theologians and ethicists
- Part of the theological interpretation of the Bible movement of recent years
- The rule of faith provides guidance for interpreting Scripture

Application Commentaries

- Commentaries that give primary attention to the application of the text in preaching or teaching
- Bible Speaks Today
- The Daily Study Bible (OT and NT)
- Interpretation
- IVP New Testament Commentary
- NIV Application Commentary

THE MESSAGE OF
GENESIS
1-11

DAVID ATKINSON


THE BIBLE
SPEAKS TODAY

THE OLD TESTAMENT SERIES EDITOR
J. A. MOTYER

THE MESSAGE OF
ROMANS

JOHN R. W. STOTT


THE BIBLE
SPEAKS TODAY

THE NEW TESTAMENT SERIES EDITOR
JOHN R. W. STOTT

Application Commentary – The Bible Speaks Today

- 50 volumes available covering all the OT and NT except Joshua, Kings, Ezra, Haggai, and Malachi with a volume for the Sermon on the Mount
- Expository treatments of the text making sermon construction easier
- John Stott the major influence in the NT volumes
- Evangelical, Reformed perspective

Application Commentary – The Daily Study Bible

- 24 volumes for OT and 17 volumes for NT covering all canonical books
- The NT volumes are the famous “Barclay” *Daily Study Bible*
- The treatment is paragraph by paragraph rather than verse by verse
- Historical, cultural, and literary background information – almost devotional in nature
- Pre-digested for use with laypeople

The *Daily Study Bible*

THE LINEAGE OF THE KING

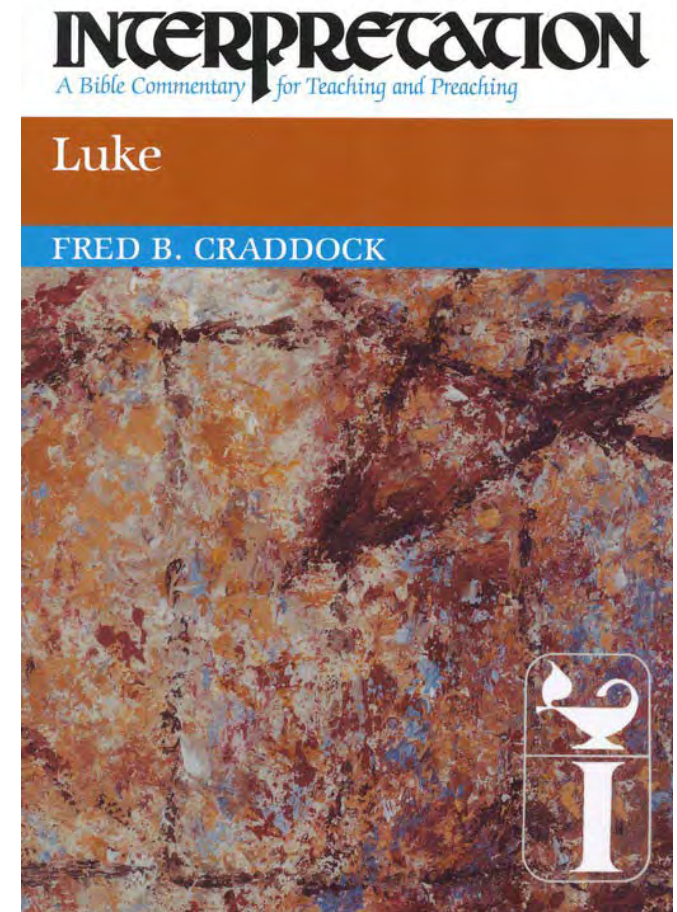
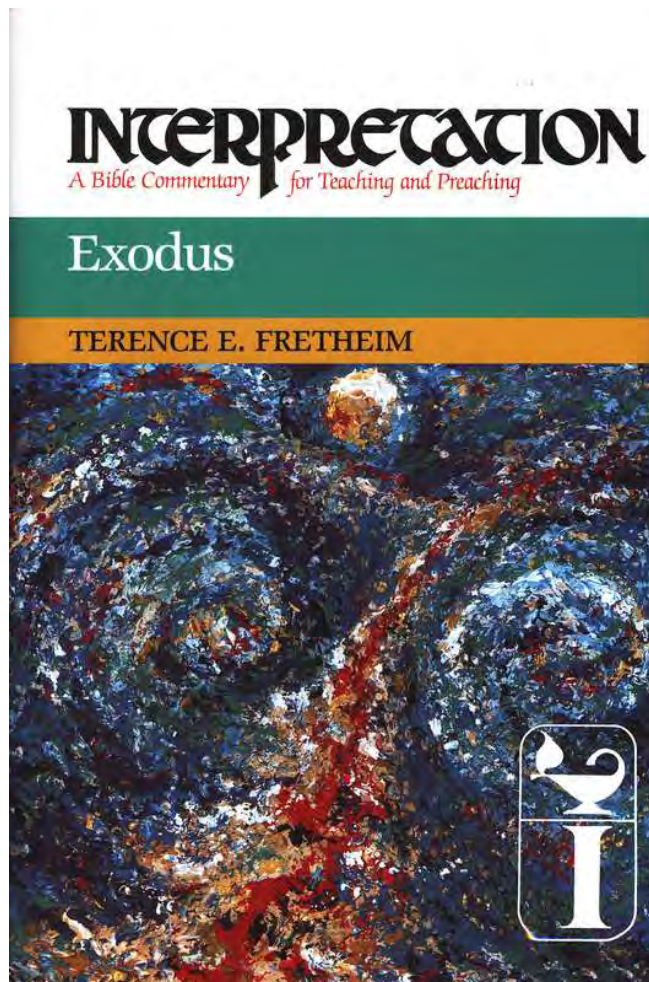
Matthew 1:1–17

It might seem to a modern reader that Matthew chose an extraordinary way in which to begin his gospel; and it might seem daunting to present right at the beginning a long list of names to wade through. But to a Jew this was the most natural, and the most interesting, and indeed the most essential way to begin the story of any man's life.

The Jews were exceedingly interested in genealogies. Matthew calls this *the book of the generation* (*biblos geneseōs*) of Jesus Christ. That to the Jews was a common phrase; and it means the record of a man's lineage, with a few explanatory sentences, where such comment was necessary. In the Old Testament we frequently find lists of the generations of famous men (Genesis 5:1; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27). When Josephus, the great Jewish historian, wrote his own autobiography, he began it with his own pedigree, which, he tells us, he found in the public records.

The reason for this interest in pedigrees was that the Jews set the greatest possible store on purity of lineage. If in any man there was the slightest admixture of foreign blood, he lost his right to be called a Jew, and a member of the people of God. A priest, for instance, was bound to produce an unbroken record of his pedigree stretching back to Aaron; and, if he married, the woman he married must produce her pedigree for at least five generations back. When Ezra was reorganizing the worship of God, after the people returned from exile, and was setting the priesthood to function again, the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, and the children of Barzillai were debarred from office, and were labeled as polluted because "These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there" (Ezra 2:62).

Application Commentaries - Interpretation



Application Commentaries - Interpretation

- Subtitle – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
- 26 volumes for OT; 17 volumes for NT covering entire Biblical canon
- Not designed as a historical critical commentary or a homiletical aid to preaching
- Rather it presents “the integrated result of historical and theological work with the biblical text”

Application Commentaries - Interpretation

- Outstanding volumes include Brueggemann on Genesis and 1 & 2 Samuel
- Terence Fretheim on Exodus
- Richard B. Hays on 1 Corinthians
- Paul Achtemeier on Romans
- James Luther Mays on Psalms
- Fred Craddock on Luke
- Thomas G. Long on Hebrews

Application Commentaries - Interpretation

Acts 2:1–13

The Sound of a Mighty Wind: Pentecost

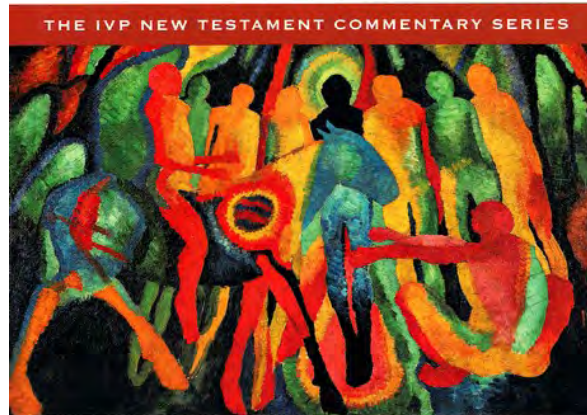
In listening to the story of the formation of the church at Pentecost, we are pursuing the truth about this peculiar new community. We are not inquiring into the truth as facticity—truth as to what happened. Rather, we are concerned about truth as to what is claimed—what is asserted in the story about the nature of this community. In reading the Pentecost account in the second chapter of Acts, we are part of an author’s struggle to bring to reality something of the truth about the church, something which cannot be known except by this story. Therefore we shall pass over questions of probable historical context, possible psychological motives, or other questions that might interest us; we must let the story have its way with us. We shall let the narrative redescribe and create new reality for us, trying to uncover the answers to the questions the story would have us ask. In reading the stories of Acts, we may note that these Acts narratives seem to have little interest in the things that make for a “good story” today—relentless introspection, detailed individual character development, probing interiority. We may read a great deal about Peter or Paul in Acts but learn little about them as individual personalities. Acts cares little for the trials and psychic makeup of individual personalities, because this is literature in service to the community. The community is at the center of Acts, with the God of the community being the chief actor in the drama.

The story of Pentecost day in Jerusalem is, for the church, a kind of “classic” (David Tracy, pp. 99–299), a story to which the faith community assigns authority and to which it returns again and again as a guide for its life. Here is revealed what the community is by recounting its origin in a powerful work of the Spirit. Sometimes this story has given the church hope; sometimes this story has judged the church and found it wanting.

Application Commentary – The IVP New Testament Commentary

17

1 PETER



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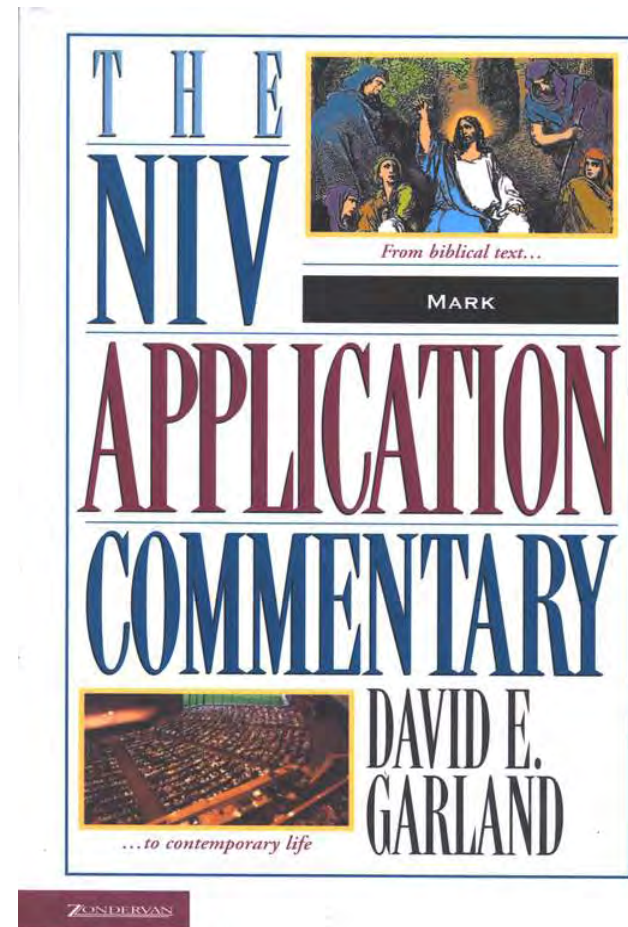
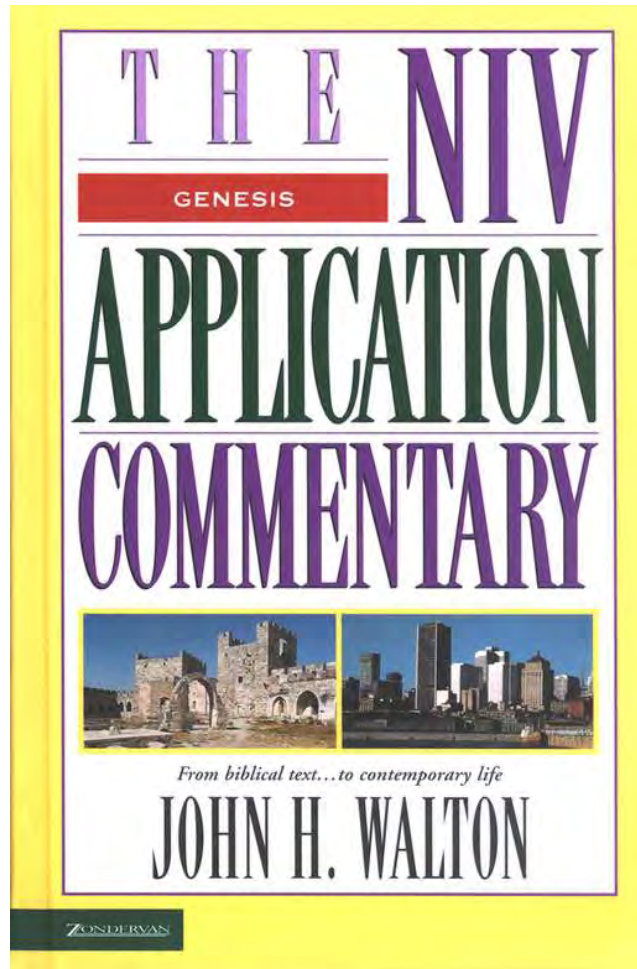
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The key to how this section begins lies in the area of Greco-Roman friendship, where to be friends meant automatically to have enemies in common (see introduction). Pilate, for example, could not be “a friend of Caesar” and at the same time not consider Jesus as an enemy who was a potential threat to Caesar (Jn 19:12). The problem for Paul is all the more striking if one of his own friends (Euodia or Syntyche) in Philippi is leaning toward a view that is opprobrious to him.

At Issue: The Circumcision of Gentiles (3:1–4) What would you do if a longtime member—and leader—of your community, who over many years had faithfully resisted the attractions of “rules” as a way of identifying God’s people, had finally begun to play the devil’s advocate for such a view—and was apparently being persuaded by it in the process? And to top it all off she and another leader are carrying on open disputes about the issue in the context of the community.

We cannot be sure of this scenario, of course, but Paul’s way of going at the issue is remarkable indeed. He chooses to capitalize on the anticipated rejoicing in Philippi over the return of Epaphroditus (2:28–29) and thus to return to the imperative by which he concluded his earlier appeal (2:17–18). Only this time he expresses it in the language of the Psalter: *Rejoice in the Lord*; and when all has been said about the present dispute, he will say it again: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, Rejoice!” (4:4). This may seem like a strange framing device within which to speak to a controversial matter; but for Paul it is the only way. Not only does he focus them again on *the Lord*, but he does so in the language of both the laments and the praise psalms, so as to set their focus above themselves and their sufferings by active participation in singing and praise to Christ.

Application Commentary – The NIV Application Commentary



Application Commentary – The NIV

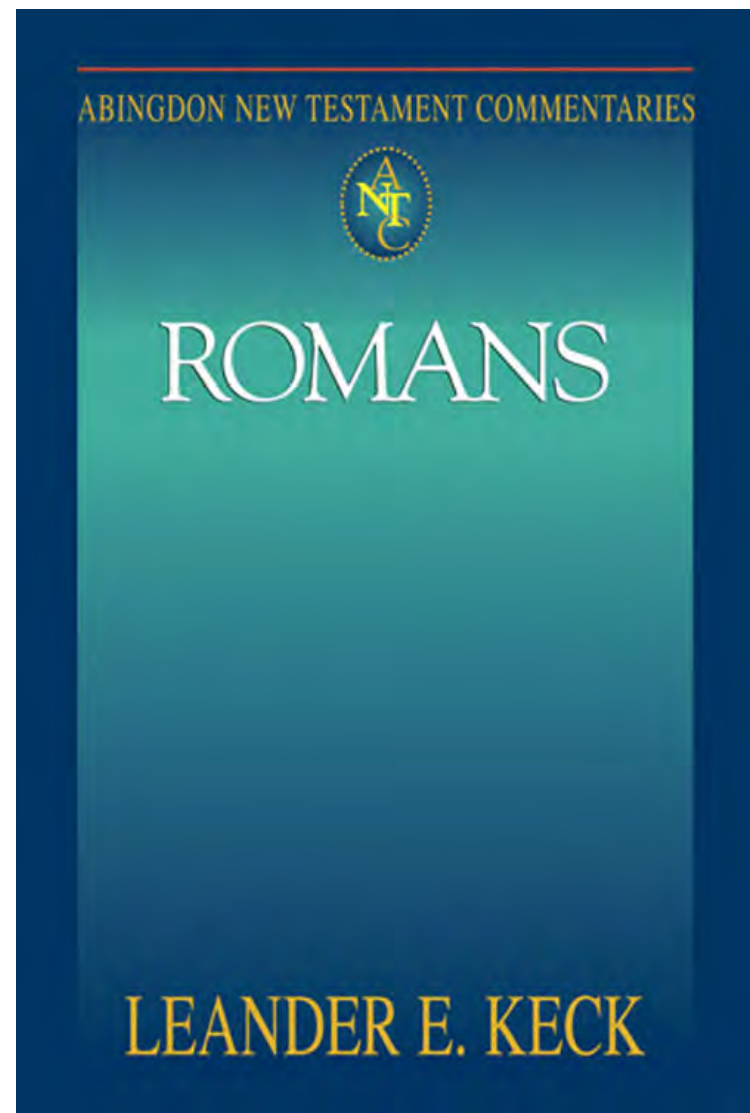
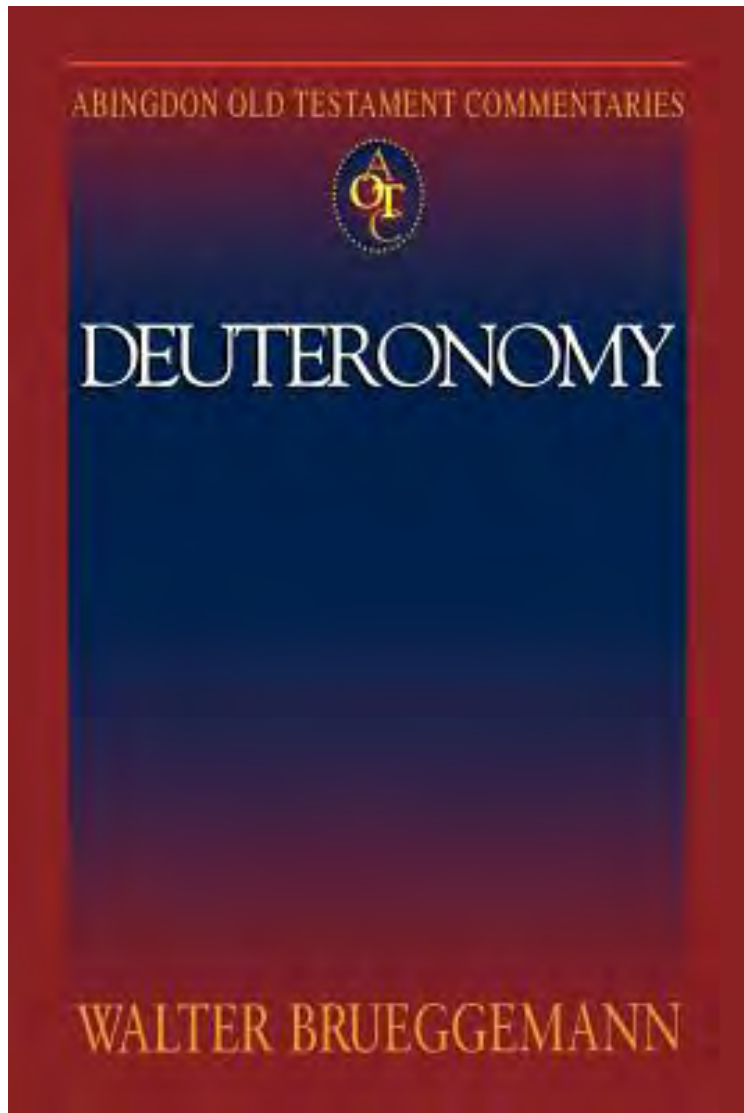
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- Commentaries that combine elements from above
- Abingdon New/Old Testament Commentaries
- New Interpreter's Bible
- New Beacon Bible Commentary

Abingdon OT and NT Commentary



Abingdon OT and NT Commentary

- 14 volumes covering 25 books of the OT and 20 volumes covering all the NT
- Committed to not becoming lost in the minutiae of word studies, literary parallels, sociological, and rhetorical hypotheses
- Rather, it clarifies the meaning of the text and provides reflection on the continuing significance of those words
- Perspective of authors is quite diverse

The New Interpreter's Bible



The New Interpreter's Bible

- 12 volumes covering all the Bible and major books of the Apocrypha
- Contains both the NIV and NRSV texts for each passage
- Each passage has a traditional commentary section featuring recent scholarship and a Reflections section offering theological significance for preaching
- Excellent scholarship – moderate but diverse perspectives – Wall on Acts, Wright on Romans

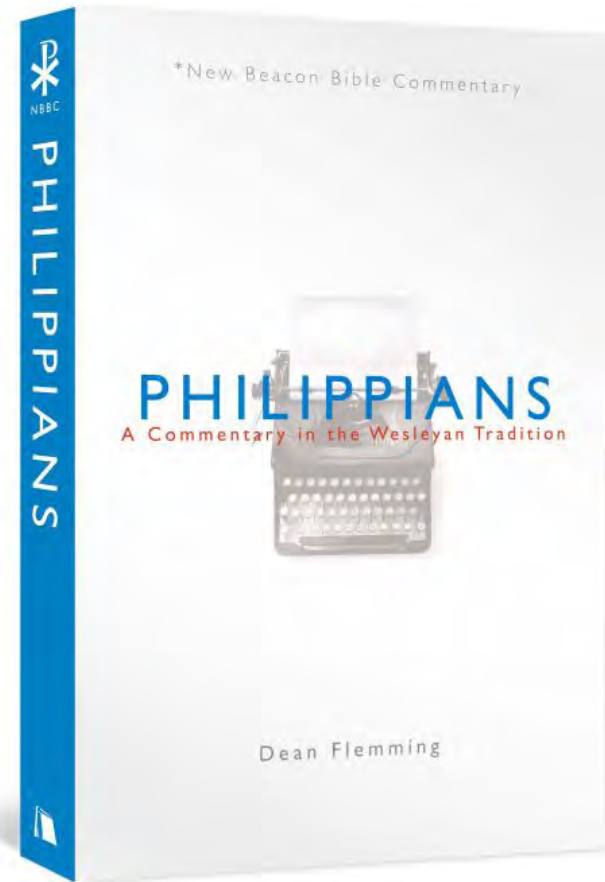
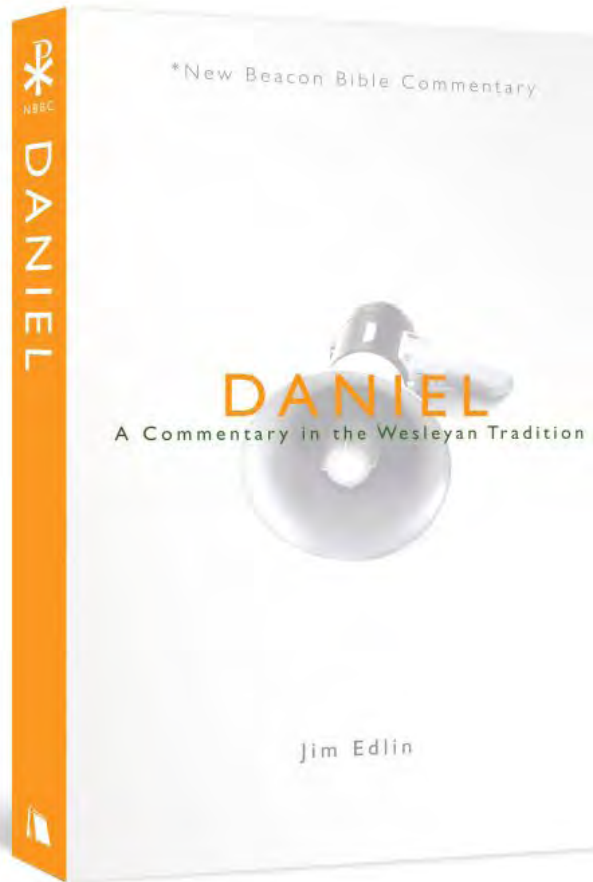
The New Interpreter's Bible

REFLECTIONS

1. The deeply personal reconciliation between the creator God and the human race in and through Jesus the Messiah can hardly be explored too often, or too thoroughly. It is the theme that lies at the heart of the Christian experience and claim, the point at which believing certain things about God is swallowed up in personal knowledge of God. To be sure, it is easy to be deceived at this point, not least through the arrogance that quickly and conveniently forgets that our knowledge and love of God are but the reflex of God's knowledge and love of us (1 Cor 8:2-3). It is easy to imagine that one is knowing the living God when in fact one is worshiping, and deriving spurious comfort from, an idol of one's own imagining. That is why, as in the present paragraph, it is vital to keep Jesus, and the cross and resurrection, at the center of the picture, and to invoke the Holy Spirit through whom God's love floods our hearts.

This knowledge and love of the true God is evoked and sustained most chiefly, as here, through meditation on the death of Jesus. Again, it is possible to get things out of focus at this point, to concentrate morbidly on Jesus' suffering in the same frame of mind that lures people to drool over some great natural or human disaster. But the abuse does not detract from the reality. The Gospel writers tell the story of Jesus' last days and hours in lavish detail; those who allow themselves to be caught up within that story will discover its life-changing power. Here the entire narrative is boiled down to a single sentence: God's love is demonstrated in that, while we were yet sinners, the Messiah died for us. Those whose first thought is to analyze that statement in terms of theological or literary derivations do more damage to it, even if their analysis is accurate, than one who knows no Greek but whose heart is strangely warmed in reading it. Paul is often criticized for being too logical or lawcourt-minded. That may be true of some of his interpreters. For Paul himself, the language of the lawcourt was a powerful metaphor, but the language of love spoke literal truth.

New Beacon Bible Commentary



New Beacon Bible Commentary

- New product being developed by Nazarene Publishing House
- 5 volumes covering 5 books of the OT and 8 volumes 10½ books of the NT are available
- Each passage provides 3 sections:
- *Behind the Text* deals with historical and cultural background material
- *In the Text* is most extensive and provides traditional commentary on words and phrases

New Beacon Bible Commentary

- *From the Text* provides insights into the theological significance and the abiding meaning of the passage
- The 2nd and 3rd sections contribute to preaching from the biblical text
- The commentary refers to the NIV, but draws interpretation from the Hebrew and Greek texts
- The perspective is evangelical and thoroughly, purposefully Wesleyan

New Beacon Bible Commentary

BEHIND THE TEXT

Philippians 2:5–11 is one of the lofty peaks, not only of this letter, but of the entire NT. It narrates the story of Christ more fully than virtually any other passage in Paul’s writings. But this is more than fine Christology. The goal of these verses is to call the Philippians to embody the pattern of Christ’s story in their own lives and relationships.

Unfortunately, this paragraph’s message and function in the letter have sometimes been overwhelmed by the torrent of scholarly attention vv 6–11 have received. Few passages in the Bible have generated more detailed discussion and sharp debate (see Martin 1997). Much of this interest has focused on three areas:

- the literary form and structure of the passage
- its possible original setting within the worship of the early church
- its religious background

Such issues are not the main focus in this commentary. Nevertheless, we must say a few things about them before discussing the meaning of these celebrated lines within the context of Philippians.

Is it a hymn? Most interpreters take Phil 2:6–11 to be an early Christian hymn (or hymn fragment) in honor of Christ, composed either by Paul or by someone else. Without question, the passage features exalted language and a poetic, rhythmic character. The NIV sets these verses in the form of poetry.

New Beacon Bible Commentary

IN THE TEXT

1. Paul's Exhortation: Adopt the Mind-set of Christ (2:5)

■ 5 This verse signals a transition from Paul's exhortations to the community in 1:27–2:4 to his appeal to the narrative of Christ in 2:6–11. But just how does it connect the Christ hymn with what precedes it?

The Greek in v 5 is compressed and can be read in more than one way. Literally, it says, *Think this among you, which also in Christ Jesus*. Commentators disagree about how to supply the missing verb in the second half of the verse. The traditional interpretation adds some form of the verb “to be”: *Have this mind-set among yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus*. The NIV takes this approach: Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. This supports the so-called ethical reading of the passage; the Philippians should adopt the same attitude that is demonstrated by Jesus in the following poem.

Others, however, argue that the real point of 2:5–11 is not an appeal to imitate Jesus. Instead, the hymn unfolds the drama of salvation (see especially Käsemann 1968 and Martin 1976, 90–102; Martin 1997). According to this so-called doctrinal interpretation, Paul urges Christians to live in light of the story of Christ's incarnation, death, and exaltation. That is, they are to live as people under the lordship of Christ. On this reading, the supplied verb is the same one (*phroneō*) that occurs in the first part of the verse. The resulting translation is: “*Think this way among yourselves, which you do indeed think in Christ Jesus.*” In other words, the Philippians should become (in practice) what they already are “in Christ.” They should live out in their relationships with one another the attitude appropriate to their relationship with Christ.

New Beacon Bible Commentary

FROM THE TEXT

1. *The divine identity of Jesus.* It is hardly surprising that Phil 2:6–11 has long been pivotal for the church’s reflection on the nature of Jesus Christ. Facing teachings that questioned whether Christ was something less than fully God or other than wholly man, the church fathers focused on questions of being: Is the *form* of God the same as the *essence* of God? Did Christ empty himself of his divinity? What was the relationship between his human and divine natures? Such concerns ultimately led to the orthodox Christology that was forged in the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon in the fourth and fifth centuries: the eternal Son, who had always shared the divine nature and substance as the Father, perfectly combined full divinity and full humanity in his incarnation.

Paul, however, is far more interested in Christ’s *identity* than his essential being (but see Jowers 2006, 739–66). Verses 9–11 stunningly identify Jesus as Yahweh, the unique divine Lord of the universe. This amounts to one of the clearest affirmations of Christ’s divinity in the NT. But Christ is exalted as sovereign Lord specifically because he emptied himself and in obedience embraced the cross (2:6–8). This means that self-giving and servanthood belongs as much to his divine identity as does his heavenly exaltation. Put another way, Jesus’ “self-emptying and humiliation are not a step away from His true nature. His becoming as we are and dying on a cross is not a temporary interruption of His own divine existence. Rather, in the emptied and humbled Christ we encounter God, we see who God really is, we come to know His true divinity” (Nouwen, McNeill, and Morrison 1982, 28).

Commentaries that Defy Categories

- Commentaries that do not fit neatly into the above categories:
- The Anchor Bible
- Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
- Reading the New Testament Commentary
- Smyth-Helwys Commentary
- Socio-Rhetorical Commentaries

The Anchor Bible

- 86 volumes covering all the NT, almost all the OT, and almost all the Apocrypha
- Originally (1950s) envisioned as an ecumenical translation with notes early volumes were thin (in every way)
- In late 1960s it became a detailed commentary
- Usually hard to find preaching material
- Very diverse perspectives

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture

- 27 volumes covering complete OT, NT, and Apocrypha
- Treats sections rather than verse by verse
- Collects comments by Patristic Fathers on each passage
- Provides insight into the earliest interpretation of the Bible
- Provides examples of earliest theological interpretation of Scripture

Reading the New Testament Commentary

- 13 volumes covering 24 books of the NT (all but the Johannine Epistles)
- The subtitle of every book , “A Literary and Theological Commentary on . . . ,” provides a good picture of its purpose
- Does not address textual details, but provides an overview of how the biblical book develops both as a literary work and as theology
- Helpful for preaching and for setting up series

Smyth-Helwys Commentary

- 11 volumes covering 18½ books of the OT and 14 volumes covering 23 books of the NT (lacks John, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians)
- Attempts to be as multi-media as possible in print form (each volume as a CD with pdf) with sidebars, charts, drawings, and fine art
- Each section features “Commentary” (traditional) and “Connections” (potential applications)
- Evangelical with diverse perspectives

Socio-Rhetorical Commentaries

- 9 volumes covering 13 books of the NT
- 7 of the volumes thus far are by Ben Witherington III, professor at Asbury Theological Seminary
- The sub-title – “A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary” points to the emphasis on cultural and social backgrounds and rhetorical strategies in the book
- Very helpful in picturing the real world to which NT books were written

Lectionary Commentaries

- *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV.* Ed. Walter Brueggemann, Charles B. Cousar, et. al. Westminster John Knox
Preaching Through the Christian Year. Ed. Fred B. Craddock, John H. Hayes, et. al. Trinity Press International.
- *The Lectionary Commentary: Theological Exegesis for Sunday's Texts.* Ed. Roger E. Van Harn. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- *The Cultural World of Jesus: Sunday by Sunday.* By John J. Pilch. The Liturgical Press.

Lectionary Commentaries:

- *Feasting on the Word*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor. Westminster John Knox Press, 12 vols. (4 vols. for each year)
- Each lectionary text is dealt with from four perspectives: theological, pastoral, exegetical, and homiletical.
- This means there are 16 treatments for each liturgical occasion.
- An excellent resource

Bible Dictionaries/Encyclopedias

- These provide articles on books, people, events, and contexts of the Bible:
- Anchor Bible Dictionary
- Harper's Bible Dictionary
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1986 Bromiley edition)
- New Bible Dictionary
- New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible

Biblical Theologies

- Major Treatments of the Theology of the Bible or Old or New Testament:
- Brueggeman – *Theology of the OT: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, 1997.
- Childs – *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, 1993.
- Eichrodt – *Theology of the OT*, 2 vols., 1961, 1967.
- Ladd – *A Theology of the NT*, Revised Ed. 1994.
- Marshall – *NT Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*, 2004.
- Von Rad – *OT Theology*, 2 vols. , 1962, 1965.
- Terrien – *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology*, 1978.
- Scobie – *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology*, 2003.

Preaching Resources

- Resources for Preaching Biblical Books or Texts
- Abingdon Preacher's Library
- Chalice Press – Preaching Classic Texts
- Lectionary Commentaries

Electronic/On Line Resources

- Bible Programs
 - Logos Bible Software
 - BibleWorks
- Internet Sites
 - Bible (NT/OT) Gateway
- Electronic Resources
 - Abingdon's *iPreach* (see Cokesbury website)

