

“slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 3:8) and the one who “descended into the lower parts of the earth” and “ascended far above all the heavens” (Eph 4:9–10; also 1 Pet 3:19), Christ intersects and transcends the subterranean, earthly and celestial realms “as an *axis mundi* and an ecosystemic agent” (132). The Cross presents the most direct visual representation of the vertical axis that unites all three realms. Baghos comments that “early Christians did not dispense with the *imagines et axes mundi* and ecosystemic symbolism inhering in Israelite culture”—shared with and appropriated from Mesopotamia and Egypt, “nevertheless they transferred it emphatically to Christ, the eternal head of the Church, who is the goal of the celestial Zion and Jerusalem” (129). I would differ slightly by saying that it was not a transferral but an actualisation of that symbolism. The early Christians were Jews who recognised Jesus as the very image that once had been only dimly traceable through the various symbols in their Scriptures but was now clearly appearing before their own eyes. Chapter Six further offers a particularly detailed exegesis of the symbolism in the Book of Revelation, which worked as a rebuke to the false claim of the Roman empire to be the centre of the world and cosmic lord, and as a reclaim of the symbolism of the *axis et imago mundi* for Christ and his heavenly Jerusalem. The New Testament understanding of this symbolism received confirmation in patristic writings, was applied in the lives of saints, and transformed over time the use of symbols in Rome and Constantinople from the 4th century—topics dealt with in the remaining part of Chapter Six and the following chapters.

I fully recommend Baghos’s book to everyone who is interested in the study of ancient religions and cultures, which offers valuable alternative perspectives on our own culture and time. For students of biblical texts in particular, the book draws our attention to the symbolic mentalities of ancient authors, and that, in turn, raises questions about how to better read and interpret their texts.

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HANNAH K. HARRINGTON, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2022). Pp. v + 529. Hardback. US\$52.00.

Hannah K. Harrington’s commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah in The New International Commentary on the Old Testament is a welcome contribution to the field. Harrington’s commentary replaces Charles Fensham’s contribution to the series which was published in 1982. With the rise of publications on Ezra-Nehemiah an updated commentary was necessary, and Harrington’s work is a fresh update.

The commentary begins with an exhaustive 97-page introduction. This introduction covers the expected topics and the discussions that are unique to Ezra-

Nehemiah such as the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah (18–21) and its relation to 1–2 Chronicles (15–17). In addition to these, Harrington focuses on the Persian rule (35–56) and even Second Temple Judaism (60–87). One encouraging feature of this introduction is its discussion of literary criticism (27–31) and social sciences (32–34); both methodologies which have become prevalent in recent years. A weakness, however, within this extended introduction is the treatment on methodology. Many commentaries do not offer *any* discussion concerning methodology, hence this segment is refreshing. Yet not much is said other than Harrington’s frustration with diachronic approaches to Ezra-Nehemiah (22). Even though many would share in these frustrations, without an alternative methodology, readers will be deciphering Harrington’s methodology from the commentary itself.

Harrington’s methodology may be eclectic. There is no doubt that diachronic features are taken seriously. However, synchronic studies on Ezra-Nehemiah are also taken into consideration. For instance, in Ezra 10:1–4 there is a switch back to the third person voice from the first person. Harrington reflects what this might mean from a diachronic perspective and also a synchronic, or literary, perspective (255). Although the final assessment is left wanting “Most likely, the writer is paraphrasing and summarizing information from the memoir as he did earlier (Ezra 8:35–36)” (255), it is nonetheless refreshing to see literary considerations.

A unique element in Harrington’s commentary is the excurses. As a scholar well versed in Second Temple literature, Harrington’s contributions shine here. For example, after commenting on the last pericope of Ezra (10:25–44)—the notorious passage about divorcing foreign women—Harrington includes an excursus on “Conversion in Second Temple Judaism” (269–74). In this section, readers can get a better grasp of how conversion evolved and how that affects our understanding of the biblical text. These excurses are scattered throughout the commentary offering further insight into general scholarship and historical thought.

Harrington’s engagement with previous scholarship, especially earlier scholarship, is admirable. There are even references to Modern Hebrew publications that offer perspectives that are not easily accessible (e.g., 87, 271). My only real criticism of this commentary is the lack of recent scholarship. Apart from Harrington’s own publications (one published in 2019), the latest publication from another scholar is from 2016. Since 2016 there has been a surge of scholarship in Ezra-Nehemiah. One cannot find any engagement with Lisbeth Fried’s 2015 Ezra commentary or Bob Becking’s Ezra-Nehemiah commentary published in 2018. Other recent works outside of commentaries have significantly contributed to our understanding of Ezra-Nehemiah. It is a shame these were not added into the discussion.

Overall, this commentary is a good contribution to the scholarship of Ezra-Nehemiah. Its strengths lie in its exegesis and historical knowledge of the

Second Temple period. I can imagine that this work will be used for many years to come. Both students and scholars will benefit greatly from reading this contribution.

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KAROL PIOTR KULPA, *Tyconius' Theological Reception of 2 Thessalonians 2:3–12* (History of Biblical Exegesis 4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022). Pp. xix + 319. Paperback. €99.00.

An early volume in the new Mohr Siebeck series “History of Biblical Exegesis” (HBE), replacing the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese* (BGBE), this study is the published version of Karol Piotr Kulpa’s 2021 doctorate, completed at Regensburg under the direction of Tobias Nicklas. The author is currently an Adjunct Professor of New Testament at the Salesian Pontifical University, Rome.

The work is articulated in four major chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter introduces the dynamic potential of reception history: the transformative experience of the interpretation of the text itself, the performative process of receiving the text in another cultural and historical context, and the ongoing productive process of the enduring impact of the text across history. The second chapter is a succinct and enlightening presentation of the North African situation in the fourth century, dominated by the hostile relationship between the Caecilianist and Donatist Churches. The third chapter illustrates the influence of Tyconius’ use of major concepts that he finds in 2 Thess 2:3–12, across his *Liber Regularum* (382 CE) and his *Expositio Apocalypseos* (385 CE?). The fourth chapter continues reflection upon the reception of Tyconius’ contribution in modern and contemporary Theology. The work’s conclusion states Kulpa’s deep admiration for the ongoing relevance of Tyconius’ originality.

The core of Kulpa’s thesis emerges in the lengthy third chapter. Following hard on the heels of the warning on false end-time teaching in 2:1–3a, 2 Thess 2:3b–12 states the author’s understanding of eschatological events. Tyconius mines this text for the elements that substantiate his speculations:

That day will not come unless the rebellion (*discessio*) comes first and the lawless one (*homo peccati/Antichristus*), is revealed, the son of destruction (*filius extermini*). He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God declaring himself to be God (*ostende se quod ipse est Deus*). Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you? And you know now what is retraining him (*detineat*,