

themes in Genesis 1–2. For example, Steven Boyd has conclusively proved elsewhere that the opening chapters of Genesis bear the hallmarks of normal Hebrew prose and should *not* therefore be interpreted as poetry or song (see Boyd, “The Genre of Genesis 1:1–2:3: What Means This Text?” in *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, 163–92). Also, the authors do not persuade that the opening chapters of Genesis establish a covenant with creation despite the arguments advanced. Was a divine covenant necessary before the advent of human sin? Moreover, positing the presence of death before the fall runs contrary to the entire train of Scripture (e.g., Ezek 18:4; Rom 5:12; 6:16, 23; 8:19–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22; Jas 1:15).

In the end, this book will likely appeal to those readers who, as the authors, are eager for writings that confirm their already-held views on the earth’s age. The discerning reader may benefit from some of the discussions on themes in the creation account, as long as he or she reads the book in a way that one of my old professors compared to eating a watermelon: keep the good parts but spit out the seeds.

Kyle C. Dunham

Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Allen Park, MI

The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church: Reading the Torah in the Light of Christ, by Richard E. Averbeck. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022. 382 pp. \$40.00.

Richard E. Averbeck is professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL. The author has researched and published extensively on matters pertaining to the law as the present volume well illustrates. Other introductions focusing comprehensively on biblical law include William S. Morrow, *An Introduction to Biblical Law* (Eerdmans, 2017) and Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Baker, 2017).

With predictable clarity and cogency characteristic of the author’s writing and teaching, he offers us a lifetime of research distilled so that interested lay people can understand and apply it to their lives but sophisticated enough to meet the methodological rigors of seasoned scholars. His goal is to clarify what the law meant in its original historical and cultural context and therefore means to Christians in the church today.

In the first section of the book, the author treats “Covenant and Context.” Here he establishes the covenant framework without which the law cannot be understood. In the second section, he explains the Old Testament law in context. He rules out several entire interpretive frameworks and full-scale interpretations of what the law is. In the third major section, “The Old Testament Law in the New Testament,” the

author demonstrates how the New Testament commands must be explained within a correct framework of the Old Testament law. This way, Christians come to an understanding of what the law means for them.

In response to the popular tendency to limit the law even to the point of no relevance for the church and the Christian, the author's thesis raises the value of the law: "*The whole law was and still is good and profitable for the Christian and applies to the life of the Christian today in a new covenant way.* We need to think in terms of the *level* or the *kind* of application of the Old Testament Mosaic law, not the *limit* or *extent* of application" (21). The law is crucial in part or the whole.

How important is the law? In the formation of the canon, "The books of Moses, in which we find the law, were the foundation that set the direction for the rest of the Old Testament—a concept that was never lost among the godly in ancient Israel" (7). In the Christian's life: "It applies to how we see the church and our place in it, how we see the place of the church in the world, and how we are called to live as believers" (19). We cannot understand the Bible correctly without understanding what the law is and how God intends it to function in our lives.

In response to the popular tripartite view of the law, civil, ceremonial, and moral, the author argues "the New Testament uses all the different categories and dimensions of the law to inform and direct the Christian life and community" (15). This leads us to three principles about the law's abiding character:

- The law is *good*: "It applies to the life of the Christian today in a new covenant 'written on the heart' sense, and it is the Holy Spirit who writes it there" (15) (cf. Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:25–27).
- The law is *weak*: "The law has never had the power to change a human heart. Only the Holy Spirit can do that" (17).
- The law is one *unified* whole: "We should not be dividing it into 'kinds of law'—for example, moral, civil, and ceremonial—and deciding what applies or does not apply to us based on that" (17).

These three biblical theological theses regarding the law's character are pivotal to a correct understanding of the law in Scripture. The author says, "The main concern here is that we must hold tenaciously to the truth and significance of *all three* theses *all the time*, and *all at the same time* because all three correspond to significant statements about the law in both the Old Testament and the New. Moreover, all three are still true in the application of the law today in the church and the Christian life" (14). No part of the law is limited or irrelevant.

If this explanation of the law is accurate, then what are the abiding ceremonial aspects of the one unified law that are applicable to the life of a Christian? Many Christians argue that the New Testament does not apply ceremonial law to the Christian or the church today. But the author draws upon the analogizing applications of New Testament writers to illustrate:

One biblical way of talking about the life that we are to live here and now is that it is sacrificial through and through. The church corporately (Eph 2:19–22) and the believer individually (1 Cor 6:18–20) are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Jesus is the high priest (Heb 4–10) and the living cornerstone of this spiritual temple (1 Pet 2:4; cf. Eph 2:20). As his followers, we too are living stones built into a spiritual house in which we also are the living believer priests who offer the sacrifices in this temple (1 Pet 2:5), including our own bodies (Rom 12:1). In this way even Isaiah 52:13–53:12, which looks forward to Jesus as the suffering servant who would die on the cross for us, also applies to believers who suffer unjustly in loving God and people (1 Pet 2:18–25). (13–14)

The ceremonial aspects of the law are thus applicable and valuable to the life of the Christian and the church, argues Averbek.

This reviewer highly recommends the author's newest book to anyone, scholar, or lay person, who wants to understand the nature of the law in Scripture and how it should impact their life and the church. A thirteen-page Scripture index as well as a topical index make the book even more helpful for personal study.

Dave Deuel

Joni and Friends International Ministries, Broadalbin, NY

The Book of Deuteronomy: Chapters 1–11, by Bill T. Arnold. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. xli + 660 pp. \$60.00.

Among the most theologically profound books of the Old Testament, Deuteronomy enjoys significant stature within the biblical canon. This commentary provides the first of a projected two-volume update to the 1976 NICOT volume by Peter Craigie. At around 700 pages, Arnold's first volume already nearly doubles the length of Craigie's commentary covering the whole book (424 pp.). Interpreters often found the latter too concise at salient points, and Arnold's work looks to fill these gaps. Bill Arnold is the Paul S. Amos Professor of Old Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, where he has served since 1995.

Arnold takes a moderately critical stance on Deuteronomy. He argues the book should not be defined narrowly by "Mosaic authorship" but by "Mosaic origin." This means that Moses's voice lies behind the book, not Moses's pen. Rather, in keeping with Arnold's understanding of ancient composition techniques, the book resulted from numerous confections, compilations, and expansions (10): "It has become increasingly clear that compositions like the book of Deuteronomy were produced by many hands over a period of many years in a process that involved more than one of these compositional and editorial techniques" (11). The impetus behind the book lies in the historical context of the