guidelines for authors (e.g. about the timeframe of the essays) would have facilitated a more coherent tome. In this volume, theologians receiving most attention are Ignatius, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the Cappadocian fathers, Evagrius, and Maximus the Confessor. As evident from this list, many important names of early Christian theologians are under-represented. Sure, choices have to be made (and perhaps some essays were never submitted), but an *enchiridion* should perhaps provide a more even selection of theologians. Nevertheless, the essays are of high quality. While reading, I often forgot the primary purpose of my reading and started studying the subject-matter instead. A handbook that can do this is, no doubt, a very good handbook.

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★★★★


Biblical theology was, for a long time, a Christian, mostly Protestant, field. There is now, however, a growing body of Jewish biblical theology, represented by such scholars as Jon Levenson, Benjamin Sommer, Marvin Sweeney, and Marc Brettler, who bring the Hebrew Bible into dialogue with postbiblical Jewish traditions in their exploration of its theological assertions. But Dalit Rom-Shiloni distinguishes herself from both Christian and Jewish scholars in their use of later sources, whether the New Testament or rabbinic literature. She describes herself as a nonreligious Jewish scholar, a secular Zionist engaged in the study of her ‘foundational cultural corpus’ (p. 75). And she labels her enterprise ‘descriptive Hebrew Bible theology’, aiming to ‘present a literarily and historically focused, rather than faith-driven, portrait of Hebrew Bible religious thought’ (p. 450). The question with which she approaches the biblical text is not ‘what does it mean?’ but ‘what did ancient voices/authors say about their God?’.

**Voices from the Ruins** takes a detailed look at the theological voices of the sixth century BCE, as the Judahites struggled to understand God’s part in the traumatic events which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem. Rom-Shiloni ranges across historiography (Kings), prophecy (Jeremiah and Ezekiel), and psalmic literature (Lamentations and seventeen lament psalms), uncovering a ‘lively and controversial world of
thought’ (p. 77). She is not interested in separating out the diachronic layers of these biblical books, as historical critics would do, but in revealing a synchronic theological polyphony. Her close textual analysis, distinguishing between speaking voices and authors, picks out the different perspectives on how to talk about, and to, God, at a time when cherished traditions were strained to breaking point by the national catastrophe.

Rom-Shiloni examines the ‘problem of theodicy’ using Ronald Green’s trilemma. He points out the logical inconsistency of reconciling the experienced reality of suffering in both the belief that God is absolutely good and compassionate and the belief that God is in control of history—all-powerful and all-knowing. She maps the theological approaches reacting to this trilemma within the Hebrew Bible along a spectrum of justification, doubt and protest, all of them attempting to resolve the tension between present distress and traditional perceptions of the divine. Jeremiah’s justifications of God, for example, explain the Babylonian siege as an illustration of God’s omniscience and omnipotence. He lays the blame for the catastrophe upon the sins of the people, ignoring any expectation of God’s benevolence. Voices of protest (found not only within Lamentations and the Psalms, but also in quotations within the book of Jeremiah of challenges to the prophet’s rhetoric), on the other hand, refuse to accept responsibility for the military defeat, and by their pleas for salvation hope to re activates divine compassion. This is not a simple two-sided debate: ‘Between the prophecies that justify God’s actions and the poetic laments that protest against him lies a rich negotiation of the theological challenge’ of making sense of God’s role in the face of disaster (pp. 37–38).

Despite the array of theological perspectives uncovered by Rom-Shiloni, all the biblical speakers she analyses take for granted the metaphor of God as king, and thus as judge and warrior. They elaborate upon it in three different ways: (1) ‘The defeat (and destruction) of Judah is seen as the outcome of a human enemy’s initiative, against which God is called to react in keeping with his role as savior of his people in times of distress’ (p. 194). Examples include Psalm 74 and the ‘peace prophets’ fiercely refuted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. (2) ‘God summons the Babylonian emperor and his troops, the enemies of his own people, and has control over the outcome of their actions’ (p. 244). Examples include the justification of God in 2 Kings 21–25 and the protest articulated in Psalm 44. (3) ‘God himself (is) the sole initiator and executor of the catastrophe’ (p. 267). This ‘forms the primary theological basis for the judgment prophecies of both Jeremiah and Ezekie’ (p. 268). They ‘mount counteroffensives to both the conception that God will certainly save the people from the Babylonians and the idea that God is unable to save’, presenting God ‘as a warrior who alone fights against his own people, with all his might, rage, and forces’ (p. 311).
As Rom-Shiloni carefully examines the biblical text, she does not shy away from its more unpalatable imagery. She discusses such concepts as divine wrath, which often leave biblical theologians feeling uncomfortable. As she says, ‘For sixth-century historiographers, prophets, and poets, God’s wrath is a live theological concept’ (p. 300). And she analyses the biblical debates over divine retribution—is it individual or collective, immediate or transgenerational?—as reflections on the well-known divine epithet from the Decalogue, ‘visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children’ (Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9), in the context of trying to make sense of the national defeat. The application of trauma studies to biblical criticism is a burgeoning field, which resonates strongly with our own times. Rom-Shiloni is not concerned with those resonances, sticking strictly to the sixth century BCE. Her discipline in that respect enables her to take an honest, unflinching look at the biblical imagery. She has, however, provided rich material to bring into dialogue with later theologies, Jewish or Christian, and later attempts to come to terms with disaster.

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Contemporary Arguments in Natural Theology: God and Rational Belief, Colin Ruloff and Pete Horban (eds), Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 (ISBN 978-1-350-09385-0), x + 338 pp., hb £90

Natural theology, as understood in contemporary philosophy, is the project of investigating theological matters, and centrally the existence and attributes of God, on the basis of natural sources of information—experience, reason, and the like—as opposed to supernatural sources of information such as revelation. Between the importance of the topic and the objectivity of the putative evidence adduced in the arguments, the stakes are obviously high. ‘Unlike most of the topics discussed in an encyclopedia of philosophy’, as Andrew Chignell quips in his article for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, natural theology is ‘one over which wars have been fought and throats have been cut’.

Colin Ruloff and Peter Horban have assembled no fewer than 18 essays on arguments in natural theology, which (they explain in their brief introduction) are intended together to illustrate ‘the creative depth and philosophical breadth of the work being done by some of the very best practitioners of natural theology today’ (p. 2). The volume is divided between ‘Revisiting the Classical Arguments for the Existence of God’ (7 essays) and ‘Further Directions in Natural Theology’ (11 essays), which