

## Guest Co-Editors Preface

At the May 2022 commencement, Asbury Theological Seminary marked ten years of graduating Doctors of Philosophy in Biblical Studies. To date, fifty-eight students have walked across the commencement stage, and each represents countless hours of studying and training. Moreover, behind each graduate there were colleagues, family, and professors encouraging them along their climactic journey. In addition, the generosity of the Amos family has also helped make this degree program a reality, and as such, they play a vital role in Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. This volume celebrates all of this.

We are honored to have worked with a great group of contributors to showcase the rigorous and spiritually wholistic education offered at Asbury Theological Seminary. Each was chosen by Myers and Schreiner toward the end of 2020 from the graduates that had already completed the program up to that point. Five scholars who specialize in New Testament studies were chosen alongside five who specialize in Old Testament studies. While each was free to choose a topic, some chose original research while other chose topics associated with their dissertation. The result is an eclectic group of essays that span theoretical issues of biblical interpretation to specific passages of scripture.

- Mark Awabdy considers why God ordered Moses to create a bronze snake in response to Israel's apostasy during the wilderness period (Numb 21). Invoking symbolic action theory popularized in cultural psychology, Awabdy argues that the bronze serpent was a polysemantic symbol that both reminded Israel of its proclivity to rebel and the Lord's ability to save. Applied to Jesus, Awabdy argues that the symbolism remains. Christ on the cross urges humanity to recognize its sinfulness and God's ability to save.
- Ryan Cook studies the so-called Asaph Psalms, showing that they reflect both theological unity and diversity. Using a social identity approach, Cook maintains that these psalms grew out of two major historical crises and collectively establish a group identity.

- Kei Hiramastu tackles the elusive “thorn” in Paul’s flesh. An issue that continues to frustrate scholars, Hiramastu adjusts the conversation by considering implications of the passion narratives. In particular, he considers the thorn in Paul’s flesh in light of specific echoes from said tradition, suggesting that Paul harnesses the passion tradition to legitimize his status in the face of his accusers.
- Drew Holland confronts the perpetual problem of historical criticism and its place within biblical scholarship. Holland does not see the historical critical method as incompatible. Rather, it’s something that needs to be a contributing voice within mature biblical scholarship.
- Judith Odor discusses the construction of communal identity in the letter to the Hebrews. She argues that social identity theory fails to consider the rhetorical processes of language and communication and why those are important for identity formation. Therefore, she utilizes a form of symbolic convergence theory to describe the process of how communal identity is birthed.
- Jason Myers bucks the traditional trends of interpreting Rom 8:1-4. He proposes a unified reading of “law” in conjunction with book-level theme of obedience. Thus,  $\delta\alpha\kappa\alpha\omega\mu\alpha$  in v. 4 refers to moral behavior and illuminates Paul’s understanding of the Holy Spirit’s guidance in fulfilling the “just requirement” of the Mosaic Law.
- Philip Richardson compares Paul use of “aliens,” “strangers,” and “citizens” in Eph 2 against its figurative use in selected Hellenistic writings. In contrast to the larger Hellenistic milieu, Richardson argues that Ephesians sees everyone as “alien” unless reconciled by Christ.
- David Schreiner investigates the semantics and function of the ambiguous group of soldiers tasked with breaking the siege of Samaria in 1 Kgs 20, the  $\text{בְּעֵרֵי שָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת}$ . After investigating the semantics of the construct chain, he considers evidence from ancient translations as well as Neo-Assyrian administrative texts. Ultimately, he argues that the phrase speaks of the “junior governors of the provinces” and is part of a larger historiographic agenda that critique a particular *modus operandi* of the Omride dynasty.

- Paavo Tucker analyzes the pedagogical philosophy of Deuteronomy in concert with Luigi Giussani. Tucker argues for continuity between the philosophies of the two, rooted in ideas of freedom, conviction, and inquiry.
- Joy Vaughan examines the juxtaposition of scenes in Acts 19, arguing that the actions of Paul and Sceva educate the audience on the differences between miracle and magic. Thus, Luke bolsters his rejection of syncretism by a harsh invective against magical practices.

We are deeply honored to offer this collection as a decennial celebration of the Doctor of Philosophy program in Biblical Studies. We pray that it blesses our professors who have been so formative in our educational and spiritual formation, the support staff that allows the program to effectively function on a daily basis, and the institution that continues to produce spiritually vibrant and academically rigorous scholars.

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