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Keith Bodner, *Elisha's Profile in the Book of Kings: The Double Agent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 190. £55.00.

The ancient Israelite prophet Elisha in 1–2 Kings is often interpreted as a minor prophet in comparison to his mentor, the prophet Elijah. Because of his dramatic exit in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11), Elijah grew in importance as an eschatological harbinger of the coming Messiah in later Jewish and Christian traditions (Mal 4:5; Matt 17:3, 10). Keith Bodner argues, however, that if one concentrates attention solely on the literary portrayal of Elisha in 1 Kings 19 and 2 Kings 2–13 itself, the character of Elisha is actually elevated in subtle ways above the elder Elijah in both power and significance. Elisha receives ‘a double share’ of Elijah’s spirit and power (2 Kings 2:9). Elisha’s miracles are greater (fed more people, saved more lives). Ultimately, God accomplishes through Elisha’s prophetic judgement what Elijah never could: the downfall of the royal house of the Omride kings in northern Israel and the possibility of a hopeful new chapter for the people of Israel.

Some critical studies assume that the Elisha stories were a separate tradition awkwardly spliced into the text of 1–2 Kings. In contrast, Bodner offers a detailed literary reading, arguing for a coherence among the Elisha stories and for a network of intricate connections and allusions to the larger Deuteronomistic history of Joshua–2 Kings. For example, Bodner compares two enigmatic stories at the beginning of Elisha’s career. In 2 Kings 2:23–5, Elisha curses a crowd of young boys who mock him at Bethel; two bears then attack and kill forty-two of the boys. This story, Bodner argues, foreshadows the later killing by Jehu (a northern Israelite Omride king) of forty-two relatives of the southern king of Judah (2 Kings 10:12–14), a sign of the infectious evil of the Omride dynasty. Immediately preceding the story of the two bears is a second story of Elisha healing the undrinkable spring of water at Jericho, making it drinkable and life giving (2 Kings 2:13–22). These tensions between death-dealing judgement and life-giving mercy at two geographically symbolic places (Bethel and Jericho) find parallels to themes and elements in the other Elisha and Elijah narratives as well as the larger Deuteronomistic history.

Bodner’s detailed literary reading of the Elisha stories in 1–2 Kings succeeds in highlighting the existence of more coherence, repetition and continuity among the disparate Elisha narratives than most previous commentators have acknowledged. Two concerns, however, come to mind as I assess Bodner’s argument. The first is Bodner’s claim (which I think is correct) that the relationship of Elijah and Elisha closely parallels the relationship of Moses and Joshua as mentor and successor (pp. 48–52, 161).

If so, however, this parallel seems to undercut Bodner's larger thesis about Elisha's pre-eminent status over Elijah. Joshua is never presented as superior to Moses and always played second fiddle (Deut 34:10–12; Josh 1:7).

A second concern emerges from a comparison of the closing scenes in the life of Elijah versus Elisha. Elijah's departure is over-the-top with its fiery chariot and ascent to heaven (2 Kings 2:12). In contrast, Elisha goes out with a whimper. He becomes ill and dies with a final odd incident of a dead man falling into Elisha's grave, touching his bones, and then coming back to life (2 Kings 13:14, 20–1). A bit of drama, yes, but nothing compared to Elijah's dramatic exit. Endings are important. If the Elisha narratives were all about elevating Elisha over his mentor, a better ending could have been devised for Elisha. In the end, Elijah was a tough act to follow.

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Andrew Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality Amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), pp. 433 + xx. \$39.00.

Prevot's first monograph seeks to engage notable philosophical and theological responses to modernity through the lens of prayer – a theme frequently addressed in popular books on practical theology but rarely in a sophisticated monograph. To the reader's delight, the book is beautifully written. Very often scholars who write on the philosophical theorists discussed in these pages find it difficult to offer an account of their thought that clearly explains their commitments and purposes. Prevot succeeds in doing so on every page, writing with a verve that makes the challenging thought of the many authors he engages utterly transparent.

The book is presented in two parts. Part I explores Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and its implications for the mainstays of Christian belief, practice and theological interpretation. As much as Prevot attends to Heidegger's later critique of modernity, he presents Heidegger's thought as a symptom of the modern eclipse of the divine in which the traditional concerns and practices of Christian spirituality evaporate. Although narratives suspicious of modernity often cast their central characters in the stereotypical roles of villains and heroes, Prevot resists this temptation by recognising that, even though Heidegger's thought is Christianly neuralgic, it opens a creative space for post-metaphysical theological reflection that any number of religious thinkers have entered.