

their plight must be remembered and preserved, for they too have helped to form significant relational experiences within the web of life.

In sum, this wonderfully crafted, insightful, and accessible book is a “must read” for all humans on Planet Earth.

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The Old Testament Is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment. By Brent A. Strawn. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. ix + 310 pages. \$32.99 (paper).

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Time passes; seasons change. Nothing stays the same; no one lives forever. Following this vein of thought, Brent A. Strawn makes the bold claim that the Old Testament is dying. Maybe it is; maybe it should. But is the Old Testament, with its multifaceted narratives and sophisticated poetry, really dying? Or are the nineteenth-century methodological approaches to interpretation, which many scholars, teachers, and preachers of the Bible continue to use in this twenty-first century, dying and taking the Bible to the grave with them? Interestingly, the Bible remains the most read book in the world, and yet Strawn contends that the Old Testament is dying.

To argue his case, Strawn organizes his study around medical metaphorical language. He is a doctor; his dying patient is the Old Testament. The “body” of the study consists of three parts. In part 1, “The Old Testament as a Dying Language,” Strawn examines the findings of the US Religious Knowledge Survey and discovers that large numbers of Americans are uninformed or ill informed about the basics of the Bible. In part 2, “Signs of Morbidity,” Strawn argues that the new atheism, supersessionism, and happiologists’ preaching are causing the death of the Old Testament. In part 3, “Path to Recovery,” Strawn recommends a multi-step treatment for the “dying” Old Testament: more lessons taught and preached from the Old Testament, new lectionaries and new and better hymns, adequate linguistic training, full fluency in biblical languages, a maturing faith, and avoidance of supersessionism.

The most interesting discussion occurs in part 2. Strawn comments on Dawkins’ critical reading of several “texts of terror,” that is, the sacrifice of Isaac and Jephthah’s daughter. Dawkins, untrained in biblical methods of interpretation, reads and interprets texts from the perspective of his social location. He points out that God is vicious and an appalling role model.

Strang's response to Dawkins' analyses criticizes Dawkins for not being a Bible scholar and for being completely unaware of form criticism and specialized treatment of intertextuality, allusion, and inner-biblical exegesis. But Dawkins reads texts from the perspective of the world in front of the text; whereas Strang reads texts from the perspectives of the world behind and of the text. Dawkins' observations and conclusions are cultural; Strang's approach is historical critical. By not reading from the margins, that is, with the victims in the stories, Strang's readings sanction divine and human violence. Furthermore, for Strang, the Bible is authoritative. He draws his theology from it. As a result, he cannot accept Dawkins' critique of the deity. Strang's interaction with Dawkins' thought pushes scholars and general readers of the Bible to think deeply about the Divine in relation to the twenty-first-century globalized world. Is the God of the Old Testament truly the Divine or the product of a male, patriarchal, hierarchical, hegemonic, and heteronormative imagination? This is not to say that the Divine does not exist, but it is to ask the deeper question of whether the portrait of the Divine in the Old Testament is consistent with one's encounter of the Divine.

Although the volume is quite detailed, it misses the mark. If the Bible is to remain alive and well today, then I suggest the following: first, texts ought to be read "against the grain," in conversation with today's world and other sacred and secular texts, to uncover certain cultural attitudes, such as sexism, racism, classism, and heteronormatism, that shaped the Old Testament and still shape the religious, political, and social worlds today. Second, newer hermeneutical approaches, such as postcolonialism, feminist studies, and queer studies, need to be learned and employed by the Old Testament's interpreters. Finally, the reading and preaching of the Old Testament can no longer be privatized, personalized, and spiritualized, as Old Testament scholar Susanne Scholz argues (See *The Bible as Political Artifact*, 2017). If these suggestions are followed, then maybe the study of the Old Testament will once more catch fire, setting its readers ablaze with the desire to practice justice and bring about the transformation of our present, broken world.

Thus, Strawn's volume fails to reach the heart of the matter by offering new paths to recover the life of the Old Testament. Instead, it continues to breathe the same stale air into lifeless bones still waiting to rise from their grave.

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