

## Book Reviews

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*Elisha's Profile in the Book of Kings: The Double Agent.* By Keith Bodner. Oxford: Oxford University, 2013. Pp. x + 180. \$99.

Bodner's fresh take on Elisha's character in the Book of Kings discloses the prophet as an extension or a "doubling" of his predecessor, Elijah. With skillful narrative analysis and a keen literary sensibility, B. reads this prophetic tradition "as a great work of art embedded in the larger narrative continuum of the Deuteronomistic History" (14). B.'s penchant for elucidating the ironies and ambiguities of narrative yields compelling and at times humorous insights that magnify the complexity of Elisha's character. Refusing to avoid the difficult texts that would resist his sequential reading, B.'s prologue, "Double Vision," begins with the most challenging account: Elisha's cursing of some youths who mock him is followed by the mauling of 42 children by two she-bears (2 Kgs 2:23–25). In reading this tale in concert with the preceding story, the curing of Jericho's waters (2 Kgs 2:19–22), B. reveals how the two episodes work together fashioning a stunning and disquieting introduction to the powers of life and death over which Elisha will prevail. The remainder of the prologue provides a helpful review of scholarship, focusing primarily on recent literary studies on the Elisha material in 1 and 2 Kings.

Chapter 1, "The Apprentice," devotes significant discussion to Elijah and his miracles, especially as these are later duplicated and doubled in number in the Elisha material. In addition, the appointment of Elisha, his family, his relative affluence, his sprinting after Elijah, followed by his return to incinerate his agricultural paraphernalia, all work together fashioning an introduction to the prophet as well as foreshadowing what is to come. The transition of office between the two prophets constitutes the focus of chapter 2, "Incendiary Successions." B. shows how suspense builds through the iteration of travel and dialogue between the two prophets until the fiery chariot carries off Elijah. Yet B.'s skillful analysis of this cinematically familiar moment is eclipsed by the author's persuasive explanation for Elisha's audacious request—a "double portion" of his master's spirit. A series of shorter stories dominated by two substantial tales, namely, the expedition to Moab (2 Kgs 3) and the Shunammite woman's fortune (2 Kgs 4) occupies the analysis of chapter 3. Here, this seemingly disparate collation of events—music aiding the prophet's discernment, a horrific child sacrifice ending a war, restoring life to a child born to a barren mother, and rescuing a

widow and her children from debtors—are insightfully interpreted together around the themes of “Music and Maternity,” the chapter’s title.

Chapter 4, “Axes and Allies,” further thickens the portrait of this prophet, showing him to be caught up in both the mundane matters of rescuing tools from streams to confronting officials who could have him beheaded (2 Kgs 4:38–68). In chapter 5, “Counter Intelligence,” B. identifies the thematic alternations—from feast to famine to feast—that navigate the drama of Elisha’s involvement in political crises between Israel and Aram (2 Kgs 6:8–7:20).

Ironically, B.’s overtures in chapter 6, “Throne Calls,” cap the characterization of Elisha when he is least present in the story (2 Kgs 8–13:21). Elisha’s one conversation with Hazeal resulting in the king’s death fashions a crucial part of this chapter’s analysis. Though the prophet is offstage for most of the texts, B. sketches him from what Gehazi reports, from his absence at Jehu’s anointing, from Elisha’s brief appearance when he himself is deathly ill, and finally from the abrupt notice of the prophet’s death. The postscript, “Double Take,” occasions, among other concluding matters, an original take on the final story of this tradition (2 Kgs 13:20–21). B.’s skillful analysis shines in his treatment of the perplexing account of a dead man’s body that was hurriedly thrown into Elisha’s grave and immediately restored to life. Of this final scene, B. remarks, “Elisha is introduced while tilling the soil and providing food for the living, and concludes his tenure *in* the soil and providing life to the dead” (152, emphasis original). That B.’s study weaves even these final narrative threads into a satisfying whole merits not only double applause but also a careful study of this work.

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*From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon.* By Jens Schröter. Translated from the German by Wayne Coppins. Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2013. Pp. xiv + 417. \$59.95.

Schröter, professor of New Testament at Humboldt University in Berlin, revised and assembled essays written between 2000 and 2006 for the German edition of this book published in 2007. English-language students will be grateful for this translation. S.’s methodological and historical observations mark significant advances in understanding NT theology and the development of canon, but this volume is not a fully articulated theological or historical treatment of canon. In fact, the NT is represented as the Jesus tradition—including extracanonical sources, Paul, and Luke–Acts. The Johannine corpus, Deuteropauline and Catholic epistles, and Revelation are mentioned only in passing.

The essays are divided into four groups, each providing a somewhat loose thread for the reader to follow. The first comprises four chapters that focus on the methodological problem of history as recollection and constructed narrative, or “the relationship between past happening and historical imagination in the writing of history” (9).