

Shorter Notices

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Wisdom's Wonder: Character, Creation, and Crisis in the Bible's Wisdom Literature. By William P. Brown. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014. Pp. xv + 220. \$25.

The book is a revision of Brown's *Character in Crisis* (1996), and as the different titles indicate, "wonder" has superseded "character" as the primary lens through which B. reads the books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. For B. "the awe-filled and awful wonder of God and creation . . . constitutes nothing less than the epistemological foundation and aim of biblical wisdom" (20). Insofar as wonder consists of awe and inquiry, the concept encompasses both the theological context of wisdom literature (creation) and its more anthropological aim (character formation). Yet while wonder provides a new framework for B.'s analysis of wisdom literature, much of the analysis itself is unchanged; numerous sections of *Character in Crisis* have been reproduced here almost verbatim. Those who have read the 1996 book will likely find the present work overly familiar.

Readers unacquainted with *Character in Crisis*, however, will undoubtedly find B.'s interpretations of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes original and insightful. Especially welcome is his insistence on the communal setting of moral formation in Proverbs, and his discussion of "mundane wonder" in Ecclesiastes offers an interesting twist on the book's theme. Less convincing are B.'s reading of Job 42:6a and, more generally, his attempt to see in Job's character a neat progression from lament to self-assurance (see Job 10:18–22).

Even in such points of disagreement, however, B.'s cogent arguments invite engagement and reflection. A sign of the work's stimulating effect is that it generates further questions. One that occurs to me is how wisdom's wonder compares with wonder in other biblical traditions. Such comparison is beyond the scope of B.'s study and, except for a brief discussion of Exodus 19 (38), is understandably absent, but I wonder whether more could be said.

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