

more faithfully in light of God’s mission. I will close with a quote from Willem VanGemenen that captures much of what I appreciate about the works noted above: “I am ... concerned that the *whole of Scripture* be heard and that the individual parts be related to each other. Further, I am concerned that the people of God be rooted in the *progress of redemption*—a redemption that involves all God’s people from creation to the new creation—and that they, too, involve themselves in advancing redemption to the ends of the earth” (VanGemenen, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, 355).

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Richard P. Belcher Jr. *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature*. NSBT 46. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018.

Richard Belcher Jr. is Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. Belcher engages in scholarly discussions while he demonstrates the Christocentric nature of wisdom literature, providing pastoral and practical insight and implications. The book has a brief “Series Preface” by D. A. Carson (xi-xii) and an “Author’s Preface” (xiii-xiv). It starts with a journey and a question about “the problem of wisdom literature in Old Testament theology” in chapter 1 and is followed by ten chapters. The author ends the book with a bibliography, which is a valuable resource for the study of wisdom literature, and an index of authors and an index of Scripture (213–42).

The author explores “The Message of Proverbs 1–9,” “The Hermeneutics of Proverbs,” and “The Theology of Proverbs” in chapters 2 to 4 (17–73). Evaluating diverse scholarly opinions of the authorship of Proverbs, Belcher takes a conservative approach, stating that “Solomon had a major role in either writing or collecting most of the proverbial sayings in Proverbs 1–29” (18). Also, he pays special attention to “the personification of wisdom,” which he identifies as “Lady Wisdom’s Teaching,” especially in Proverbs 1:20–33; 8; and 9 (29–37). In particular, he makes an insightful contrast between Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly in his analysis of Proverbs 9: “Lady Wisdom is also personified in Proverbs 9 as a banquet hostess. The significance of Proverbs 9 is that Lady Wisdom is contrasted with Lady Folly in order to highlight the choice between them” (34).

The author’s analysis of the “Christological implication of Lady Wisdom” deserves close attention (37–38). He explores various scholarly opinions

of “the personification of Lady Wisdom” in Proverbs 8. For example, he summarizes Andrew Steinmann’s view: “Steinmann argues that Proverbs 8:22–26 refers unambiguously to the preexistence of divine Wisdom as a hypostasis of the eternal Trinity. More specifically, this passage speaks of Christ’s eternal divine nature and his eternal generation from the Father” (37–38). Disagreeing with Steinmann’s approach to the identification of Lady Wisdom, Belcher provides a biblical-theological comparison between the type and anti-type:

It is difficult from an OT standpoint to argue that Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8 is a divine hypostasis of Christ’s eternal divine nature. Lady Wisdom is constantly presented in Proverbs 1–9 as a personification of wisdom. There are too many differences between Lady Wisdom and Christ to identify them, but the similarities are significant for later connections to Christ. ... And yet the personification of Wisdom lays a foundation for a typological relationship with Christ, where the differences are not a problem because the anti-type is always a greater fulfillment than the type. Connections to Christ can be made not just with Proverbs 8, but with how Wisdom is personified as a street preacher and a banquet hostess. ... But Christ is greater than Wisdom because he is specifically identified as the Son (John 1:18), equal with God his father (John 10:30), the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), the one who will reconcile all things to himself (Col. 1:20). (38)

The author moves on to deal with “Theological Issues in Job 1–3,” “Divine Retribution, Suffering and God’s Justice” in Job 4–26, and “Where Is Wisdom to Be found?” in Job 27–42 in, respectively, chapters 5, 6, and 7 (75–132). Briefly exploring divergent scholarly opinions about the date of the book of Job, he adopts the opinion of Franz Delitzsch and Edward Young that “a date during the era of Solomon fits with the flowering of wisdom literature during this period,” as we read the culmination of wisdom literature during the reign of Solomon in 1 Kings 4:31–34 (76). Reflecting on Job’s suffering as a blameless and righteous man, the author connects it with the suffering of Christ and believers’ suffering in Christ in the present life:

The life and death of Jesus confirms the message of the book of Job and brings clarity to the issues raised in the book Jesus demonstrates in his life and death the limitations of a narrow view of divine retribution. ... He exemplified in his life the tension with which the friends of Job wrestled how one can suffer and still be righteous before God. ... Following Jesus may include hardship, difficulties, persecution and even death. The believer does not look for the fullness of salvation in this life and so is willing to sacrifice for the sake of Christ. This kingdom perspective understands that suffering is not necessarily a direct result of sin, but is a result of living in a fallen world and many times is a consequence of following Jesus. (131–32)

Afterward, the author discusses the book of Ecclesiastes, concentrating on “Key Questions Concerning the Book of Ecclesiastes,” “The Message of Qohelet,” and “The Theology of Ecclesiastes” in chapters 8, 9, and 10 (133–87). Exploring the diverse opinions of the authorship of the book of Ecclesiastes, Belcher—like Gleason Archer, Walter Kaiser, Duane Garrett, James Bollhagen, and O. Palmer Robertson—adopts Solomonic authorship, insisting that “although Solomonic authorship can make a difference in the interpretation of the book, it is not integral to the message of the book” (134). He identifies one of the major themes of Qohelet as “futility” under the sun. In doing so, he provides a Christological solution to the problem of futility. He argues that “Qohelet’s dark ‘under the sun’ view” is a reality of the broken world apart from God’s saving grace in Christ. It is a visible picture of the hopelessness of the present world, which is “fallen and cursed.” Here is how he sums it up:

Futility, however, will not have the last word because Jesus has taken upon himself our sin and the futility of life. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), so that our lives change from frustrating futility to having a purpose (Rom. 8:28). ... The frustration of life that Qohelet documents so well is still part of what believers struggle with because we live in a fallen world, but even in the darkness of this life the light of Christ shines. (182)

In the final chapter, the author explores “the relationship between Jesus and wisdom” from several perspectives (189–212). Exploring Jesus Christ’s teaching ministry, he considers Jesus “as a wisdom teacher” and identifies Jesus as “a sage” or “a person of wisdom,” as he uses “parables and proverbs” while exercising the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. Comparing “Jesus’ teaching and the teaching of Proverbs,” the author summarizes a believer’s relationship to the wisdom of God: “The one who feared Yahweh sought God’s wisdom in Proverbs, but the one who is poor in spirit will seek Jesus as the wisdom of God. The kingdom of God established by Jesus has an impact on his use of proverbs” (195).

Belcher as an Old Testament scholar demonstrates sound scholarship, interacting with divergent scholarly opinions in the areas of authorship, genre, literary structure, and theology in the wisdom literature of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Moreover, he does pastors and laypeople a great service by providing valuable pastoral and practical insight. Besides, he has Christological consciousness in his analysis and interpretation of the wisdom literature. Nevertheless, one significant element is conspicuously absent: a covenantal analysis of and outlook on wisdom literature. Indeed, since the Old Testament canon is a covenantal canon, covenant is essential to the

interpretation of the entire Old Testament. Yahweh granted the Old Testament canon to the covenant community of Israel, who were the recipients of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants while they were waiting for the coming Messiah as the mediator of the new covenant under the Davidic kingdom. In that regard, if we overlook the covenantal nature of the wisdom literature, then it is similar to bypassing something of great value. Despite this reservation, I strongly recommend Belcher's valuable book to missionaries, pastors, seminarians, and students of the Bible for God's wisdom for their lives and ministries in the present world.

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Henri Blocher. *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle*. NSBT 5. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; Nottingham: Apollos, 1997.

In *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle*, Henri Blocher proposes to illuminate the riddle the doctrine of original sin presents. The introduction points out that the phenomenon of human evil raises three questions: "First, why is the perception of human evil generally accompanied by feelings of indignation, guilt or shame?" "Secondly, if humans are capable of so much evil, how is it that they also reach heights of heroism, performing admirable deeds of selfless service and devotion to the truth?" "Thirdly," if the world owes its origin to a holy and wise Creator, "how can we face the apparent contradiction" resulting from "the presence and power of evil in human life?" (11–12).

The Christian doctrine of original sin responds to these questions raised by what Blocher labels elsewhere the "opaque" mystery of evil.¹ We need the light that this doctrine brings in order to understand the world in which we live—even though it has been put "under a bushel" for a few decades. *Original Sin* was written to remedy this lack, collecting from Scripture, recognized as the ruling norm (*norma normans*), the light we need. While sitting "on the shoulders of giants," Blocher does not cultivate a "servile adherence" to the various traditions of which they are the representatives but seeks the "grace to see even further and ever more clearly" (13).² We

¹ Henri Blocher, *Doctrine du péché et de la rédemption* (Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 2000), 25: "The enigma of evil is the only 'opaque' mystery of Scripture."

² "This enquiry ... draws on the work of many predecessors, among whom ... Augustine, François Turretin, Blaise Pascal, Jonathan Edwards, Soren Kierkegaard, John Murray and Paul Ricoeur, to whom I am indebted in various regards."