

BOOK REVIEW

David M. Carr. *Genesis 1–11*. International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2021. Hbk. 159 pp. ISBN 9783170206236. \$128.00.

The book of Genesis is among the most discussed (and debated!) portions of Scripture, serving as the frontispiece of all canonical literature. No matter what type of commentary one envisions, it is impossible to cover everything comprehensively. According to the series editors, the International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT) is designed to offer an international, ecumenical, and contemporary interpretation of Holy Writ (including the Apocrypha) to a broad audience of scholars, laypeople, and pastors (9–10). David M. Carr’s *Genesis 1–11* offers a synthesis of close readings and an up-to-date study of the formation of these chapters in their ancient Near Eastern context.

The introduction mainly covers the author’s proposed literary stages of the text (e.g., “Models for P[riestly] and Non-P[riestly] Relationship[s],” “Layers and Dating in Pre-P Primeval History,” etc. [15–40]). The commentary itself explicitly “builds on and presupposes the above discussions” (27). That said, due to space constraints and certain other matters (see 12–13) most of the *technical* and *diachronic discussions of precursors to Gen 1–11* are found in Carr’s *complimentary-style* monograph, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Genesis 1–11 has ten major sections: (1) The Seven Day Creation Account (1:1–2:3); (2) The Origins of Adult Human Life in the Garden of Eden (2:4–3:24); (3) First Descendants of the Initial Human Couple (4:1–26); (4) The Genealogical Line from Adam to Noah and his Sons (5:1–32); (5) The Marriages of Sons of God with Human Daughters and Their Effects (6:1–4);

(6) Noah and the Flood (6:5—9:17; 9:28–29); (7) The Conclusion of the Noah Account—Noah and His Sons (9:18–29); (8) Post-Flood Peoples Descending from Noah’s Sons (10:1–32); (9) Divine Prevention of Human Collective Power through Linguistic Confusion and the Scattering of Humans (Gen 11:1–9); and (10) The Genealogical Line from Shem to Abraham (11:10–26).

Carr judiciously disclaims providing full reference(s) to the “mountain of critical scholarship” regarding Genesis 1–11, noting “the range of excellent commentaries recently or soon appearing that do more of that” (38). Would that more authors followed suit.

Linguistically, Carr exhibits an exceptional grasp of the important differences between verbal stems (*qal*, *piel*, *pual*, *hiphil*, *hophal*, *hithpael*, etc.). Carr also displays an acute awareness of the subtle intricacies of language, encompassing grammar, lexicography, and textual criticism, which are further vindicated by ample references to many of the standard reference works. Though the author has a caveat that his translation is perhaps “a bit more awkward” (41) at times than that of most traditional English versions, his fine attention to detail is much appreciated.

Carr’s literary sensitivity is also prominent throughout the text. For instance, commenting on Gen 6:5–8, Carr notes, “[o]n the one hand, YHWH ‘sees’ the pervasive evil of humanity and plans to wipe humanity off the face of the ground. On the other hand, Noah finds favor in ‘the eyes of YHWH’” (241). Elsewhere, Carr suggests that the word play that the *niḥoaḥ* (“sweet smell”)–*Noaḥ* (“Noah”) pair produces from the burnt offering of clean animals may represent that the scribe saw Noah’s act as “representing a way that he fulfilled his father’s promise that he would provide ‘comfort’ . . . out of products of the ground (Gen 5:29)” (246).

There is also effective engagement with the MT accentuation system. By way of example, Carr explains that the Masoretes point the verb *nuakh* with a *dagesh* in the *nun* in Gen 2:15 (i.e., “Adam” in “Eden”), thus indicating a *Hiphil* II (or B) form which means “to set, place” (see *DCH* 5:638–39; Gesenius¹⁸ 793; *HALOT* 1:679; *TLOT* 2:723) rather than “cause to rest” (i.e., *Hiphil* I [or A]) (88). Carr further elaborates that this sense

better fits the context where “the text goes on to say that human was not put there to rest, but ‘to work and guard’ the garden” (88). While other examples could also be cited, this careful attention to detail is much appreciated.

To critique, I have a few concerns. One source of frustration is the odd decision to include a “selective bibliography” (342–49). To be clear, if something was cited “once or a few times within the compass of a few pages, the full information on that item is given at the location where it is discussed” (342). While this might not be so bad, the editorial decision to do away with an author index incredibly exacerbates this problem, making it nearly insufferable.

I also have some quibbles with the effectiveness of the subject (i.e., Index of Key Words). Given that not a few entries have only one page number apiece (e.g., “queer reading,” “transgender criticism, of Genesis 1,” “postcolonial reading,” etc.), to what end does it serve to exclude other prominent topics such as *covenant*, *creation*, *curse*, *diachrony*, or *etiology*? Lastly, the Index of Hebrew Words is far from thorough.

Text-wise, much to the chagrin of some scholars, Carr does not hesitate to maintain that the Genesis Deluge was “global” (241, 270; cf. 238–39, 246, 276). That said, concerning the Flood narrative *in toto* (Gen 6:5–9:17), Carr also claims, “though this section now features a primary focus on God’s rescue and other living beings amidst a world-destroying flood, it likely grew from a much more locally-focused account of Noah and his sons” (275).

Some readers might also take umbrage with Carr’s approach to gender and the Fall (Gen 2–3). According to Carr (132–34), there are *three* distinct models for gender dynamics. Initially, there is a somewhat egalitarian model in Gen 2:5–25, followed by a depiction of female domination in Gen 3:1–6. The final development in Gen 3:7–24 portrays a more conventional gender hierarchy like that often observed in ancient Israel. This perspective contrasts with other scholars, such as Gordon J. Wenham’s *Genesis 1–15* (WBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) (81), where he, among others, blends the first and third models, proposing that the divine declaration of male rule in 3:16 merely un-

folds the woman's helper role that had already been specified in Gen 2:18.

I am also unconvinced that Carr adequately addresses the numerous challenges posed by the documentary hypothesis in addressing the substantial ancient Near Eastern flood myth parallels. In brief, the *final form* of Genesis exhibits approximately seventeen points corresponding to the Epic of Gilgamesh, with the J source sharing only twelve points in total and the P source a mere ten. Is it not strange then that both the J and P versions (independently) lack certain elements of the shared tradition, and that, when combined—and *only* when combined—they form an account bearing an extreme resemblance to it? (See also Dustin G. Burlet, *Judgment and Salvation: A Rhetorical Critical Reading of Noah's Flood in Genesis* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022], 25).

Such matters notwithstanding, there is much to be gained from Carr's *Genesis 1–11*; those who already embrace the Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP) will find it helpful. This volume is thus particularly useful for scholars and advanced biblical studies students in Bible college, Christian university, or seminary settings. Highly recommended!

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