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Reviews

Old Testament Ethics: A Guided Tour
John Goldingay
Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2019 (viii + 278)

John Goldingay, a venerable scholar of the Hebrew Bible, wrote the short essays in this book while he was finishing his stint teaching at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, and then moving back to his native England. While in Pasadena, he also served on the pastoral staff of a local Episcopal parish. His religious stance is moderately critical evangelicalism. Goldingay positions himself with the approach of Christopher Wright (more on that below), more "conservative" than, say, John Barton and Cyril Rodd, and more "liberal" than, say, Roy Gane and Walter Kaiser.

All these details come into play in this book. Goldingay has arranged the book into five parts, with forty-three main chapters, each a brief essay followed by questions for reflection and discussion. A list of Goldingay's own titles for the parts and chapters does a good job of displaying the range and content of the material:

1. "Qualities"
   godlikeness; compassion; honor; anger; trust; truthfulness; forthrightness; contentment
2. "Aspects of Life"
   mind and heart; wealth; violence; shalom; justice; reparation; Sabbath; animals; work
3. "Relationships"
   friends; neighbors; women; good husbands, good wives; who you can't have sex with; people who can't undertake a regular marriage; parents and children; nations; migrants; cities; leaders

4. "Texts"
   Genesis 1 (In the Beginning)
   Genesis 2 (To Put It Another Way)
   Leviticus 25 (Sabbaths for the Land and the Jubilee)
   Deuteronomy 15 (When a Family's Life Falls Apart)
   Deuteronomy 20 (How [Not] to Make War)
   Ruth (Commitment)
   Psalm 72 (The Exercise of Authority with Faithfulness)
   Song of Songs (Sex)
5. "People"
   Abraham; Sarah and Hagar; Joseph; Shiphrah and Puah; Yokebed and Miryam; David; Nehemiah; Vashti, Esther, and Mordecai

The book grew out of a series of short commentaries, *The Old Testament for Everyone*. The result is that the essays read more like short edifying and thoughtful devotionals than critical treatments of his topics. Further, the Bible is cited throughout from Goldingay's own rendering: This is fine, but there is little acknowledgement of other possible renderings. This is the kind of book that he set out to write, and we should assess it on these terms. I will do that, and then offer some remarks as to whether this kind of book has shortcomings that might have been overcome.

Overall, the book is a pleasure to read. Goldingay is fairly traditional in his moral views, even when he accepts certain conclusions from historical criticism that, in the opinion of some traditionalists, might undermine his own views.

There is a calm warmth of piety and pastoral concern permeating the whole book. For example, in his fine chapter on "truthfulness" (38–43), he primarily takes texts from Proverbs about truth-telling, but also about restraint and gentleness in speaking. Likewise, in his chapter (77–82) on *shalom*—the Hebrew word that is commonly translated "peace"—he points out that the word focuses on peaceful relations between people, and not on inner peace. This chapter has a fine description of what well-being should look like: a well-functioning community, family life, robust bodily life, the inner life, and religious life (80–81; cf. also 166–67, on the city). He does not always maintain this emphasis in other chapters, but then again: Who among us is as consistent as we would like to be?

Certainly, in today's world, we are interested in what a book on ethics might say about things such as wealth, sex, and power. On these Goldingay is basically traditional, with a few surprises. For example, he is clear in his affirmations about the connection between sex and marriage, and about marital faithfulness. He is also clear in rejecting same-sex marriage, but in such a way as not to let everyone else off the hook: "A same-sex marriage thus does fall short of the [biblical] vision. But so do lots of other forms of marriage" (143). (See also his chapter on Genesis 2, 185–88.)

A Christian ethicist writing about wealth needs to deal with contentment and work, which Goldingay does. But I found myself wondering how much he knows about basic

economics, and about the relationship between immutable principles and prudential implementations of those principles. I wish he had commented on this.

Goldingay discusses power in the light of Psalm 72, "an ethical vision of what the king was for" (211). He brings up "righteousness" and "justice," and offers a description of them (212–13):

> So the essence of the Hebrew idea of righteousness is that you do the right thing by the people in your community, the people you're in relationship with—you are fair, generous, honest, and caring toward them, and the first duty of kings, presidents, or mayors is to exercise authority in a way that expresses faithfulness to their people and to exercise authority in a way that facilitates faithfulness among their people.… [Social justice is] viewing people with power as having responsibility to use their authority to see that the community operates in that kind of way.

Even though I think as a Hebraist and lexicographer that Goldingay exaggerates the distinction between the Hebrew words typically rendered *justice* and *righteousness*, I found this description very helpful (and moving as well). It left me wondering whether we might supplement Goldingay by appropriating the moral foundations theory offered by Jonathan Haidt; but that, of course, is another discussion, beyond the scope of this book.

This leads to what I find to be some shortcomings in the way Goldingay has presented his work. There are times when he says things that he surely knows are controversial, and yet simply passes them by without even acknowledging the controversy. For example, he tells us, "There is no suggestion in the Old Testament that it is our job to work for *shalom* in the world or seek to further *shalom* or seek to extend it, as there is no suggestion in the New Testament that we are to work for the kingdom of God or seek to further it or seek to extend it. *Shalom* is God's promise, not our responsibility" (81).

This raises so many questions that I am astonished he does not explain himself. I am left wondering what would constitute a "suggestion." I also wonder what he thinks Psalm 34:14 ("seek *shalom* and pursue it") means. (He wrote a commentary on the Psalms; why not cite it?) What does he think pastoral ministry is? How does his contrast between God's promise and our responsibility avoid the problems of zero-sum-game thinking? (Does he agree that it *is* a problem?) How is this bald statement consistent with his claim to be in line with Christopher Wright? And so on.

There are, unfortunately, enough such instances to distract the informed reader. Further, I do not understand why he did not include some material on his overall method: What is the place of biblical texts, of human experience, of natural law? How does he interpret Bible texts? What is the connection, say, of the pragmatism of Proverbs to moral norms? How does Proverbs (or any other book of the Bible) function in moral formation? Where does the moral imagination come in? What about stories (and the Big Story)? Granted, it may be artificial to tackle all of these things before setting out, but some attention to them as we go along would be valuable. One can infer an outline of Goldingay's answers to these questions, and I do not always disagree. Nevertheless, I think being more explicit, even in a "popular" book, would serve his audience better. (Goldingay has written a more

academic work on Old Testament ethics, and perhaps he thinks that is the venue for such matters. I think he could give more to the laity.)

The book is generally easy to read, and it is thought provoking. I, too, often wished that Goldingay had offered more argument than assertion, but I also often found his thoughts helpful and engaging. Would I recommend the book for a discussion group? Maybe, provided that the group was led by someone who could guide them through some of these difficulties, who could help them to see that Goldingay is one voice and not the final word and thus to ask questions and think further, and to do so without dismissing Goldingay's genuine contributions.

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Religion and Finance: Comparing the Approaches of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Mervyn K. Lewis and Ahmad Kaleem
Cheltenham, Edward Elgar (2019) (xviii + 248)

This book is an overview of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic financial teachings and practices. According to the authors, the distinctive financial characteristic of the Abrahamic faiths is their prohibition of interest. This has significant implications for economic activity. The authors combine historical, theological, ethical, and economic analysis, and the result is a useful introduction to alternative finance.

Chapter 1 uses the global financial crisis of 2007–2008, and the ensuing unimpressive economic recovery, as a motivating narrative for the book. The authors briefly discuss conventional explanations for these phenomena, such as failures of monetary policy and regulation. However, they contend instead that "the financial crisis stemmed from a lack of morality and a failure of conscience or sense of self-restraint on the part of those involved" (6). The authors focus not on the financial crisis itself, but instead on what the crisis shows us about the moral failures of finance, from the perspective of the three Abrahamic faiths.

In chapter 2, the authors provide an outline of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (In passing, I note an error in their classification of Christian denominations on page 10: the Russian Orthodox Church is part of Eastern Orthodoxy, not separate from it. However, some of the churches that comprise Eastern Orthodoxy have broken communion due to recent ecclesiastical-geopolitical disputes.) The authors survey the history, sources of authority, beliefs, and practices of each. They also discuss the relationship between these faiths, both historical and contemporary. This is a useful background chapter, especially for those who are unfamiliar with one (or more) of these religions.

The authors compare and contrast the approaches to usury of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity in chapter 3. Usury typically means charging interest on a loan or, more broadly, demanding repayment greater than the principal. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity all have teachings that condemn usury. But actual financial and commercial practices