

## Book Review

**David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002): 311 pp..**

Note: This review appeared in *Interpretation* 57 (2003): p. 328.

This volume is a revision of the author's dissertation that first appeared in the 2000 WUNT series. Its basic thesis is that "[t]he entire Isaianic New Exodus program provides the structural framework for the narrative of Acts" (250). In the introductory chapter, Pao lays out his methodological presuppositions, offering a cautious, yet able, defense of traditional positions, including authorship and historical plausibility, in the realm of Luke-Acts scholarship.

In chapter two, Pao traces the significance of Isaiah 40:1-11 as a "hermeneutical lens" in the Lukan writings, arguing that the "way" terminology of Isaiah is transferred to the Christian community in Acts. As Isaiah "eschatologized" (56) the foundational Exodus imagery, Luke applies this paradigm to the formation of the Christian movement and its competitive claims. In chapter three, Pao points to five passages in which programmatic use of Isaiah is used to frame Luke's narrative (Luke 4:16-30; 24:44-49; Acts 1:8; 13:46-47; and 28:25-28).

In chapters four through seven, the author focuses on four distinct themes that "control the program of both Isaiah and Acts: the restoration of Israel, the word of God, the anti-idol polemic, and the salvation offered to the nations/Gentiles" (111). Among the distinctive contributions here, one might point to Pao's description of the "hypostatization" of the word of God as "an independent reality" or "an individual being" in Acts (160). Also, Pao's focus on the Isaianic influence in the prophetic anti-idol polemic of Acts underscores an often overlooked theme. Another noteworthy contribution is Pao's argument that Luke's most significant departure from the Isaianic New Exodus motif in Acts is found in his elevation and inclusion of Gentiles.

Questions might be raised about some of Pao's contentions. For example, is it an overstatement to say that the non-personal word of God "should be considered the main character of the narrative" (159)? Surely, this overlooks the role of Paul as the dominant figure in Acts. Nevertheless, Pao makes a strong contribution to the expanding study of the influence of scripture, in general, and Isaiah, in particular, in the formation of the Acts narrative.

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