This is the second edition of this work, first published in 1999 and reviewed in RBL by Everson in June 2003 (http://bookreviews.org/pdf/1881_684.pdf) and Bulkeley in February 2004 (http://bookreviews.org/pdf/1881_683.pdf). The present edition is twenty-eight pages longer (xviii + 485) than the first (475). The chapter headings and most of the subsection headings have all been retained. Most of the alterations involve some expansion of the original text, chapter endnotes, as well as the addition of a few charts and maps. The nature of the textual alterations may be briefly exemplified. Chapter 1, “The Old Testament as Theological Witness,” contained a section called “Social World and Theological Dynamics,” with two paragraphs devoted to gender studies and social status. These have now been expanded into two separate subsections, the first on “Gender” noting some developments in recent gender-sensitive scholarship and the second on variables pertaining to “Socioeconomic Status and Class.” The following subsection on “Canon and Church” has seen the insertion of a cross-reference to and additions of tables I–IV on pages 25–28 listing the divisions and contents of the Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox canons. The chapter concludes with the addition of fourteen bibliographical footnotes noting, *inter alia*, the revival of interest in theological readings of the Bible, the merits and demerits of historical-critical methods, the minimalist challenge, and recent “impressive comprehensive responses” to it. Subsequent chapters witness the insertion of tables regarding the agricultural and civil
calendar (58), major individual sacrifices prescribed by Leviticus (132), the structure and number of the clans of Israel (202-3), the chronology for the united and divided monarchies (229, 264), and also maps of the geographical setting of the exodus (95), the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (180), David and Solomon (240), Saul (261), Assyria in 722 (291), the capture and return of the ark (226), Solomon’s twelve administrative districts (249), Jerusalem in Jeremiah’s day (328), Israel under Persian rule (428), Nehemiah’s reconstruction of the wall of Jerusalem (436), David’s family tree (244), and Solomon’s temple (253).

The expansions do not substantially address Bulkeley’s and Everson’s criticisms of the first edition for the frequent and sometimes glaring bypassing of contentious issues and perspectives, for not explaining the arguments underpinning many noted positions, and for failing to do justice to large portions of the narrative. Thus, their overall assessment that the 1999 text could serve as a significantly helpful companion textbook for an introductory course aimed at audiences in theological settings but not as the textbook continues to hold for the present edition. The strengths of the work lie in the integration of an overarching historical framework and focus on the final form of the canonical Hebrew text with perspectives from a variety of recent approaches to biblical study (rhetorical, social, political, etc.) in an attempt to provide prompts for theological reflection. Treatments singled out earlier as most refreshing were those that focused on the land as “gift, summons, and seduction” in chapter 6, on preexilic messianism in chapter 9, and on Job in juxtaposition to Proverbs in chapter 11. I found chapter 5, “The Structures of Covenant Life,” on Exod 19–40, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (127–71) particularly useful for its presentation of Deuteronomy as a pivot point in the canon, serving both as an inclusio for pentateuchal protology (creation theology) and as a curse/blessing promising introduction for the rest, commending the need courageously to persevere in obedient hope. Given the inevitable difficulty of producing a comprehensive one-volume introduction for seminarian and theological settings, and moreover one that can map out areas of needed engagement between theological interests and modern exegetical approaches to biblical study, the authors must be thanked for attempting to invigorate this genre of writing.

As the need for such introductions is severe, were a third edition ever envisaged, lecturers and readers could appreciate some further expansion or reflection around a number of already-accented motifs. Needs and preferences vary. Three of my own could be introduced as follows.

(1) The need for a theological approach to the Old Testament texts is grounded on the need to “take seriously their claim to speak about encounter and relationship with God” (1). As such the Old Testament is presented as a “theological witness” and its canon as an
“authoritative collection of writings,” a “collected faith testimony,” a collection of “polyphonic voices” or as “scripture through which God’s word becomes a reality and a resource to the modern synagogue and church.” Marcionism and supersessionism are explicitly rejected (2–3) and the need to engage with Jewish and talmudic categories upheld (12–15). Yet nothing is said of the canon as being composed of Scriptures that “defile the hands” or that are “inspired” or “authored” by God, as “inerrant” in some sense or at some level and thus requiring an “opening” of the ear and of the heart for this sense and level to be understood. Is this language that the authors wish to avoid? It would be interesting to have a clear response to this question. If the answer is yes, would the reason be the presence in the Old Testament of texts judged “repulsive” by ancient and modern sensibilities (137 re Num 5:24, 27)? In any case, what, ultimately, do the words used in defining the Old Testament and its canon, words such as “authoritative,” “witness,” “encounter with God,” mean? The discussion frequently reiterates the need “to bring the multiple voices and contexts of ancient Israel into dialogue with the complexities of our own reading communities and world in which we read” (3). Presumably, in the context of references to “authoritative” “witness to” “encounter with God” the possibility is envisioned of God continuing to be interested in communicating with the present generation. If so, and if the canon is to be understood as mediating this communication and encounter, should not the process by which it is to be interpreted need some kind of charismatic assistance? If the interpreter is to play Aaron to the Moses of the text, should not his mouth also require divine assistance? (cf. Exod 4:16 and 7:1 with LXX, Targum Onqelos, Targum Neofiti)?

(2) The question of canon thus raises the question of interpretative methodology. The methodology in question involves, as noted by the previous reviewers, surveying modern exegetical methods and integrating their perspectives into theologically stimulating discussions. One could thus pay tribute to the authors for “allowing the many (polyphonic) voices of the OT to be heard and to move beyond the typically monochromatic views often seen in traditional Christian studies in systematic or dogmatic theology” (Everson). A Judeo-Christian theological approach should, granted, eschew fideistic dualism and engage with rational, scientific and secular methodologies (30-31). But if the predominant perspectives and methodologies employed to comment on these texts fail to wrestle with a teleological suspension of the X (please replace X here with any perspective surveyed, e.g., social, political, rhetorical, historical-critical), why should Kierkegaard’s treatment in Fear and Trembling of Gen 22 by positing a teleological suspension of the ethical remain “unsurpassed” (92)? Pace my love for the provocative nature of Kierkegaard’s discussion, I do not believe the ethical is suspended in Gen 22 for reasons spelled out by a number of Jewish scholars ranging from Spiegel to Fackenheim (cited in ch. 11 on p. 423) to Kass (not least among these is Kass’s reading of the particle

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n’a in Gen 22:2 as “please,” undermining the interpretation of Gen 22 as a command). But the citation of Kierkegaard in endnote 16 and of Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope* in endnote 18 of chapter 3 are a welcome inclusion of reference to perspectives that sought in the past to develop methodologies to deal with God-talk. More references of this nature to allow a concerted engagement with what they have to offer would hardly reduce the discussion to monochromatic dogmatism.

(3) One recently modern perspective in which the authors evince recurring interest is that pertaining to our capacities of imagination. Owen Barfield’s essay on *What Coleridge Thought* traces the rising theological interest in this theme to the Romantics. In the present case, the importance of the theme of imagination is implicit behind observations such as the following: “the participants in the Exodus find themselves involved in the intentional formation of a new social community to match the vision of God’s freedom” (106), referenced as they are to Bruggemann’s work on *The Prophetic Imagination* (125 n. 6). Now, of course modernity has hit upon *Hard Times* that reduce theological interests to wish-fulfillment dreams. Its methodologies reveal that the heroes of biblical narrative have a thousand other faces in the world’s literature, myth, dream, and folklore, whereby, via their morphological analysis, Moses could easily drown in the soup of Sargon, Oedipus, Romulus, King Arthur, and Snow White (cf. W. Propp, *Exodus*, 155). And yet Tolkien’s question as to how he managed to fall into this soup in the first place still stands to be answered. And as for wish-fulfillment:

Yes! “Wish-fulfilment dreams” we spin to cheat
our timid hearts and ugly Fact defeat!
Whence came the wish, and whence the power to dream,
or some things fair and others ugly deem?
All wishes are not idle, nor in vain
fulfilment we devise—for pain is pain,
not for itself to be desired, but ill;
or else to strive or to subdue the will
alike were graceless; and of Evil this
alone is dreadly certain: Evil is ...
Blessed are the men of Noah’s race that build
their little arks, though frail and poorly filled,
and steer through winds contrary towards a wraith,
a rumour of a harbour guessed by faith.... (J. R. R. Tolkien, “Mythopoeia,” *Tree and Leaf*, 85–86)

Few themes excite the culture more these days, and for good reason. Given the interest that the authors evince in this field, some unpacking of the reasons for its relevance to the
theological exegesis of biblical narrative would prove valuable to lecturers and future-pastors in as much as such approaches clarify some challenging questions in Christianity’s dialogue with modern culture and provide models for reflection on how biblical narratives may liberate people to “envision God’s freedom.”