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*Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance.* By David A. deSilva. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002. 428 pp., \$29.99.

In keeping with the books of the apocrypha presented in *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*, deSilva discusses sixteen apocryphal works. Naturally, discussions involve the ten deuterocanonical books received by the Roman Catholic Church (with the Additions to Esther and the Additions to Daniel counted as one each). In addition to the deuterocanonical books, however, the Greek Orthodox Church also includes 1 Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, and 3 Maccabees with 4 Maccabees printed in an appendix, and the Slavonic Bibles approved by



the Russian church add one additional work, 2 Esdras. Thus deSilva directs attention to an expanded apocrypha, which like the NRSV is an inclusive representation of various groups of Christians. One of deSilva's stated goals is "to move readers beyond seeing the Apocrypha as one more thing that separates one group of Christians from another and toward seeing these books for what they are in and of themselves and to value them on that basis" (p. 15). Therefore his work, in a very positive sense, is in keeping with and thereby complements the ecumenical spirit of the NRSV committee. (See Bruce M. Metzger's discussion in *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001], 120–22).

Chapters 1 and 2 serve as introductory chapters for the book. On the one hand, chapter 1 introduces "The Value of the Apocrypha" (pp. 15–41). "Without the Apocrypha," deSilva rightly claims, "the modern student of Scripture has a skewed view of the Judaism into which Jesus was born and within which his followers moved" (p. 26). On the other hand, chapter 2, "The Yoke of the Gentiles" (pp. 42–62), sets the historical context. Although it too is introductory, it provides "the basic contours of the history and the challenges faced by Jews during the [Second Temple Period], so that he or she will be better able to place each individual book of the Apocrypha and the contribution it seeks to make to Jewish life within a meaningful framework" (p. 42).

The remaining chapters, 3 through 16, are dedicated to the books of the apocrypha. With the exception of chapters 14 (The Prayer of Manasseh: "The God of Those Who Repent") and 16 (Psalm 151: "He Made Me Shepherd of His Flock"), deSilva generally discusses (1) the structure and contents, (2) the textual transmission, (3) the author, date, and setting (except for 1 Esdras), (4) the genre and purpose (except for Wisdom and 1 Esdras), (5) the formative influences, and (6) the influences for each apocryphal book. At times, deSilva adds to his general discussion. Thus chapter 3 (Tobit: "Better Almsgiving with Justice"), chapter 5 (Additions to Esther: "The Aid of the All-Seeing God and Savior"), chapter 6 (Wisdom of Solomon: "The Righteous Live Forever"), chapter 8 (Baruch: "Return with Tenfold Zeal to Seek God"), and chapter 10 (The Additions to Daniel: "Let Them Know That You Alone Are God") include information about first-century theological issues. In chapter 3 (Tobit: "Better Almsgiving with Justice"), chapter 4 (Judith: "Hear Me Also, A Widow"), and chapter 7 (Wisdom of Ben Sira: "In All Wisdom There Is the Doing of Torah"), deSilva discusses the sociality issue of woman.

Throughout his book deSilva demonstrates how the apocrypha informs us of God, ethics, and challenges to faithful living, as well as reveals to us the significant developments in Jewish history, culture, and thought that provide the matrix for the early church. In fact, Christians who want to understand the world into which God sent his Son need to read the apocrypha. DeSilva's book helps provide additional insight into these extremely significant Second Temple works.

As with all books, however, there are some issues that could afford further discussion and thereby warrant comment in critical reviews such as this one. For instance, the connection made between Matthew 11:28–30 with the Wisdom of Ben Sira 6:24–28; 24:19 and 51:23–27 has been challenged by Jon Laansma (in *I Will Give You Rest: The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997] 159–208). Nevertheless, deSilva evidences a wealth of awareness concerning the significance of the apocrypha for NT studies.

In addition, the title *Introducing the Apocrypha* strikes me as misleading. For whom was this "introduction" written? At times, deSilva writes as though his reader has no background in the biblical languages and then within the same paragraph assumes his reader can read Hebrew (p. 215). He also exhibits critical discussions beyond the comprehension of most lay people, college students, and many pastors. Daniel J. Harrington's *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) would better suit lay people and many college students. A more appropriate title might be *The Apocrypha:*

*A Critical Analysis of its Message, Context, and Significance* whereby the more suitable audience might be upper level college students and most certainly seminary and doctoral students as well as college or seminary professors. It is without hesitation that deSilva's book should be incorporated as a textbook to be read along with the reading of the OT apocrypha.

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