

**Review of Thomas B. Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*
The Anchor Yale Bible, 6B. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015**

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Thomas Dozeman's commentary, in the respected Anchor Yale Bible series, is a partial replacement of the Anchor Bible commentary on the complete book of Joshua by G. Ernest Wright and Robert G. Boling. The earlier commentary was marked, and marred, by adherence to the biblical archaeology paradigm, which had been discredited in historical-critical scholarship if not by the time of Wright's death in 1974, then at least by the time of the commentary's publication in 1982. Since then, historical-critical scholarship on Joshua has seen the rise to dominance of the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) hypothesis and its subsequent decline. Dozeman has produced the first major commentary on Joshua which assumes that the book never comprised a part of the DtrH but originated as an independent, post-Pentateuchal composition. Central to Dozeman's argument is his contention that, contrary to what we would expect from a single "deuteronomistic" author, Joshua's concept of Yahweh's unconditional land promise is inconsistent with Deuteronomy, and its presentation of a total conquest of the land under the unified twelve tribes of Israel is at odds with Judges 1-2. Dozeman argues, further, that the deuteronomistic language throughout Joshua, often seen as "Northern" and "early," is "blended" with P language throughout Joshua 1-12, providing corroboration of the book's post-pentateuchal composition (although I do not find evidence of this "blending" to be as convincing as, for example, the blending of such language in Numbers). He dates Joshua to the post-exilic (Persian) period, with a provenance in Northern/Samaritan Yahwism before the Jewish-Samaritan split. According to Dozeman, Joshua later underwent a series of revisions when it was inserted between Deuteronomy and Judges. These revisions, very similar to Rudolf Smend's deuteronomistic redactor (DtrN), soften the inconsistencies with Deuteronomy and Judges, at the cost of internal inconsistency, by making the land promise conditional on observance of Torah and presenting the conquest as incomplete.

Dozeman's approach to Joshua is laid out in his extensive Introduction, before being examined in detail in the body of the commentary, saliently condensing extensive historical-critical scholarship on Joshua, not to mention on the Pentateuch and Former Prophets. The Introduction begins by surveying the history of research into Joshua since the nineteenth century (5-20), before Dozeman outlines his own position (20-32). Intriguingly, and with strong traces of Norman Gottwald, Dozeman identifies an anti-monarchical and anti-urban ideological strain running through Joshua that, as he further contends, forms the primary impetus for the literary extermination of all the inhabitants of the

Canaanite royal cities, including their kings. The Introduction continues with an overview of the substantial differences between MT, LXX, and Dead Sea Scroll versions of Joshua (32-42). Dozeman sees expansions going both ways between MT and LXX and recognizes the textual pluriformity of the book(s) of Joshua. Yet while theoretically not preferring MT and rejecting searches for an illusory *Urtext*, Dozeman provides only a translation of MT in the commentary body (167-84 *et passim*), relegating his translation of LXX to Appendix I. This is compensated by his detailed discussion of LXX and Dead Sea Scroll variants in the Notes.

An informative section of the Introduction then examines “Central Themes and Literary Structure” within Joshua 1-12 (43-77), including: the theology of Holy War, the role of the ark, the ban and religious violence, aniconic religion and monotheism, anti-monarchic and anti-urban ideology, the influence of and departures from the Assyrian royal conquest accounts, and the utopian vision of a promised land. The commentary also includes a welcome section on reception history (77–94). Dozeman distils many of the important trajectories in the reception of Joshua from antiquity to the twenty-first century, judiciously balancing brief summaries with more detailed accounts of key interpretations. Yet with limited exceptions, for example the history of interpretation of Rahab’s character (240), the main body of the commentary does not develop historical-critical or theoretical arguments from this cataloguing of the reception of Joshua. Unlike the Illuminations commentary series, reception history is tacked-on rather than being integrated into the commentary. Dozeman’s commentary also includes a detailed Bibliography (97-163), a list of geographical terms in MT and LXX (535-55), a General Index (557-66), Index of Authors (567-76), and Index of Ancient Sources (577-627).

Each section of the main body of the commentary (187-500) contains detailed discussions of textual-critical and historical-critical issues. Here Dozeman defends his innovative argument for the late, post-pentateuchal composition of Joshua, a work he claims was originally composed independently of both Deuteronomy and Judges. He clearly sets out rival positions on the composition of individual passages and his own reasons for preferring a post-pentateuchal, two-stage history of composition. Dozeman’s theory of an “independent” Samaritan first edition of Joshua (24) attempts to account for its distinctive Northern traditions, as well as its discordant ideology of the total conquest of the land and unconditional land promise. But the limited “Northern” features in Joshua, and the lack of clear anti-Judahite polemic, cast doubt on a Samaritan provenance for Dozeman’s extensive first edition of Joshua, as opposed to a Samaritan provenance for some of its sources. Also notable is that Jerusalem, while unconquered in Joshua, lies problematically (for a Samaritan edition) at the centre of the conquests (Joshua 6-10) and at the centre of the land distributions to Judah and Benjamin (Josh 15, 18: passages seemingly included, at p. 24, in Dozeman’s independent first edition of Joshua). Noteworthy is the account of the Gibeonites in Joshua 9, which, while critical of their role in the central cult, still implicitly accepts that Jerusalem is the special site of the altar of Yahweh, identifying it rather than Gerizim as Deuteronomy’s “chosen place” for worship (as Dozeman also

concludes in his commentary on this passage; and cf. Joshua 22). Dozeman's thesis of a post-Pentateuchal first edition of Joshua is cohesive, and broadly persuasive, but arguably overemphasises the importance of its Northern elements and, to this end, minimises literary disunity preceding the post-Pentateuchal stages of composition.

Dozeman's commentary is deeply concerned with the questions of violence, genocide, displacement, and occupation—themes which provide *potential* overlap with key concerns of contemporary critical theory. In the Acknowledgments, Dozeman thanks his late friend Professor David Klooster, to whom the commentary is dedicated, “for keeping the difficult question of religious violence at the forefront throughout my writing of this book” (xiv). Indeed, he states that “[t]he aim of the ... commentary is to explore in more detail the nature, function, and causes of religious violence in the book of Joshua” (94). Yet by contrast with his extensive engagement with historical-critical works, Dozeman considers a much more limited sample of critical theory on these matters, which sometimes restricts his perspective. For example, when Dozeman considers ancient utopian literature, he asserts that there are two types, rural and urban, and that Joshua represents the former type (76). But the literature on utopia does not allow for such a wooden classificatory scheme, and the problem of defining utopia is intrinsic to its (frequently inchoate) expression of desire for a better world. Even the current Anchor Yale Bible commentary series editor John J. Collins, in his taxonomy of biblical utopias, adds two further categories to the agrarian and the urban, including the “ideal community”—seemingly a more pertinent category for the book of Joshua.

Dozeman contends that Joshua's purpose in exterminating the local population was to realize a bucolic vision of Israel without kings or cities; genocide was an imagined revolutionary response to the city-based violence of the Persian empire and its urban clientele. This shifts the discussion back to familiar historical-critical topics such as socio-economic conditions in Yehud, while sidestepping the urgent task of direct ethical critique. The approach is all the more curious given that one might legitimately read the entire book of Joshua without once imagining that its descriptions of invasion, mass slaughter, and occupation are driven by the dream of establishing Israel as an agrarian paradise. According to Dozeman, we may infer this rural-utopian ideology from such passing information as, *inter alia*, the references to unhewn stones used to construct the first altars made in the land (8.31; cf. Deut 27.4-5), the description of the knives used to circumcise the Israelites as made of flint rather than metal (5.2-3; LXX 21.42a-d; LXX 24.31a), and Joshua's curse on Jericho (6.26). It is surprising that a book purportedly touting a pro-rural ideology—one so extreme that it justifies the extermination of entire city populations—has been so inexplicit, even oblique, when it comes to describing this ideology, particularly when Joshua has a proclivity for prolixity in his sermons. Such an ideology is also completely at odds with the land distribution in Joshua 13-19, with its four-tiered city-based hierarchy of capital—district capital—town—satellite villages, which reproduces rather than subverts patterns throughout ancient Near Eastern empires. The theory of an egalitarian, anti-monarchic, peasant-farming ideology is just as much an artificial and unconvincing imposition on the book of Joshua when used by Dozeman to

account for the book's violence as it is when used by Marxist theorists to impose nineteenth-century economic categories on the text. Dozeman's attempt to address the violence in Joshua via a historical-critical reconstruction of the political context not only produces an unlikely historical-critical explanation, but makes inadequate use of the resources which critical theory has to offer.

The commentary's discussions of historical-critical scholarship make it a valuable resource for historical-critical, literary, and theory-based biblical criticisms. But given the substantial ethical and theoretical issues which the author sought to address, the volume highlights the need for contemporary biblical commentaries to engage with each of historical criticism, reception history, and critical theory to the same degree of rigour.



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