

Foreword

THE STORY OF SAUL and David is vivid and compelling drawing the reader into a narrative of gripping action and complex characters. Typical of the best Hebrew narrative, the narrator of the Saul and David story rarely reveals the motivations of characters and even more sparingly provides moral evaluation of its characters' actions, preferring a strategy of showing rather than telling the story. Readers are expected to enter into the story with their imagination and to do their own evaluations.

The masterfully written account of Saul and David leaves plenty to the readerly imagination. Some readers have a tendency to simplify and turn Saul into a bad character and David into a hero, both military and spiritual. More recently, scholars have reversed this traditional reading to turn Saul into a tragic rather than evil figure and David into a villain (see the work of Gunn, Halpern, and McKenzie, cited and evaluated by Tushima). In response, other scholars, both literary (Borgman) and biblical (Long), have presented sophisticated literary readings of Saul and David that have defended the traditional reading.

It is into this deeply contested interpretive territory that Cephas Tushima enters with his own sensitive and provocative reading of the biblical text. He does so with a full knowledge of these previous efforts, their successes and failures, and gives a very persuasive reading. As his title indicates (*The Fate of Saul's Progeny in the Reign of David*), his study focuses on a particular important indicator of the narrative's assessment of David's character, namely how he treats the surviving children of his predecessor.

I am pleased to recommend Tushima's work not just for his skill as an interpreter of ancient Hebrew literature, but also because of his skill as a biblical theologian. While many scholars are content to analyze the text, Tushima is interested in navigating the theological issues that his reading of David, which punctures a typical traditional-positive reading of David, raises. In particular, how does a David, shown by Tushima to

be no great moral hero when judged by the Deuteronomic code, become so important to royal theology and in particular the development of a messianic expectation?

It is a particular joy to introduce this work because Tushima was my student for a number of years. Even after I left Westminster Theological Seminary for Westmont College, we maintained a professional and personal relationship. Through his diligent research and sharp insight, he taught me much about both narrative analysis as well as the proper interpretation of the Saul and David story. Now that the book is published I expect that it will have the same impact on future readers.

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