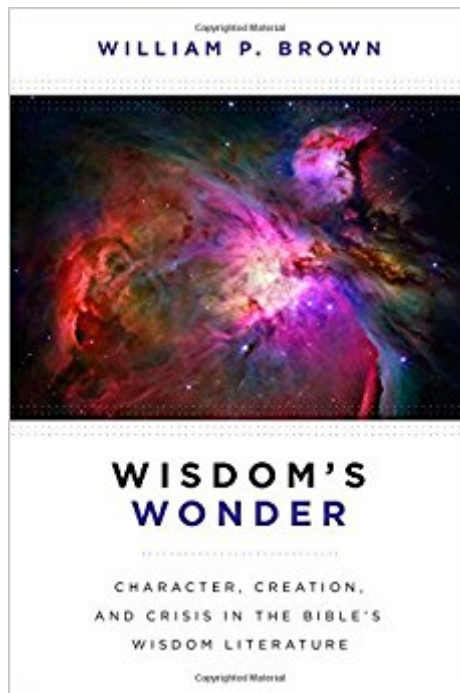


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Wisdom's Wonder: Character, Creation, And Crisis In The Bible's Wisdom Literature



Synopsis

Wisdom's Wonder offers a fresh reading of the Hebrew Bible's wisdom literature with a unique emphasis on "wonder" as the framework for understanding biblical wisdom. William Brown argues that wonder effectively integrates biblical wisdom's emphasis on character formation and its outlook on creation, breaking an impasse that has plagued recent wisdom studies. Drawing on various disciplines, from philosophy to neuroscience, Brown discovers new distinctions and connections in Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Each book is studied in terms of its view of moral character and creation, as well as in terms of the social or intellectual crisis each book identifies. Most general treatments of the wisdom literature spend too much time on issues of genre, poetry, and social context at the neglect of discussing the intellectual and emotional power of the wisdom corpus. Brown argues that the real power of the wisdom corpus lies in its capacity to evoke the reader's sense of wonder. An extensive revision and expansion of Brown's *Character in Crisis* (Eerdmans, 1996), this book demonstrates that the wisdom books are much more than simply advice literature: with wonder as the foundation for understanding, Brown maintains that wisdom is a process with transformation of the self as the goal.

Book Information

Paperback: 236 pages

Publisher: Eerdmans (March 11, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0802867936

ISBN-13: 978-0802867933

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #326,741 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #105 in Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Wisdom Literature #399 in Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Criticism & Interpretation > Old Testament #956 in Â Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Bible Study > Old Testament

Customer Reviews

Wisdom's Wonder by William P. Brown is a rewrite of his *Character in Crisis*. This is a scholarly work targeting those with some level of background in Wisdom literature. In this volume Brown combines two common interpretive frameworks of wisdom literature, character formation and focus

on creation. He proposes that wonder is the â œsapiential link between world and will, the nexus between character and creationâ • (5). In other words, the study of Godâ™s ordered creation teaches humans how to live an ordered life. Awe of Godâ™s creative power drives both this study of creation and the response of virtue. Brown defines terms and lays out his methodology in chapter one: 1. How does each book construe the human self, creation, and God in such a way as to foster wonder and thereby form character? 2. What crises or sources of disorientation does each book address? 3. Given wonderâ™s affinity to fear, how is fear profiled in relation to wisdom? What are the objects of terror identified in each book? 4. What objects are deemed worthy of wonder? Who or what is considered quintessentially Other? How does each book arouse desire for the Other? Chapter two walks through Prov. Brown places Prov. at the return of the exiles from Babylon, and cites the danger of assimilation as the crisis (41). Brown covers Job in two chapters. Chapter three focuses on the crisis: Job is an apparently righteous man who experiences difficulties in life, and what Brown calls the â œdeformationâ • of his character (68). Jobâ™s conflict with his friends highlights the challenge of Jobâ™s experience to their understanding of God and the creation. Brownâ™s section on Jobâ™s final defense is insightful and instructive.

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