Psalms. By WALTER BRUEGGEMANN, and WILLIAM H. BELLINGER, JR.. Pp. xxvi + 639. (New Cambridge Bible Commentary.) New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. ISBN 978 0 521 60076 7 (paperback). £23.99.

Meeting the high expectations borne of a scholarly partnership between Brueggemann and Bellinger, this book indubitably matches the aims of the *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* series "to elucidate the Hebrew and Christian scriptures for a wide range of intellectually curious individuals". An attractive and readable volume, it displays both breadth and depth of scholarship and reflection on the Psalter, with equal clarity in layout and thought.

The canonical critic will be pleased by the opening listing of the Psalms with their superscriptions, and the form critic too will appreciate the tabulation in the Introduction of the Psalms according to their "types" as defined by the writers. While this latter table might be open to the charge of over-simplicity, it is nevertheless a summary of the contents of the Psalter in a clearly-laid out fashion which, when read in conjunction with the rest of the commentary, will be seen to chime with the methods and style of the book as a whole. Supplementary Sections are also listed: these accord with the breadth of the book in the "Bridging the Horizons" paragraphs, and the depth of the research in the "A Closer Look" sections. Prefatory material includes a substantial reading list which is well-organized, up-to-date (the latest citation is a 2010 publication date), and in a variety of different languages.

The commentary itself cover philological aspects such as manuscript traditions (e.g. p. 27 fn. 1), Hebrew vocabulary (e.g. p. 28), translation matters (e.g. p. 473-4), and sources from the Ancient Near East (p. 59); interpretative issues of type, setting and structure are frequently treated (e.g. p. 351); and genre considerations receive good discussion (e.g. p. 114 on the "rhetorical maneuvers" of motivation, complaint, and petition within lament). Few assumptions are in fact made about the level of understanding that the reader already brings to the text, and explanations of common OT technical language is given with a light touch (e.g. on the Pentateuch, p. 29). Occasionally, however, questions that an unversed reader might bring are left untouched, such as how to understand the term "selah", used in the translation.

In the "Closer Look" sections, literary considerations are often touched upon (e.g. "Hebrew Poetic Devices", p.28). Literary context is offered with reference to the OT (e.g. p. 35, "Covenant Renewal Ritual") and other scriptural traditions (p. 61 makes selective connections between Ps 8 and other Biblical texts, even hinting at midrashic developments). Theological context is extremely broad, often given in "Bridging the Horizons" sections covering for instance monarchy and exile (p. 390) or "Universalism and Particularism" (p. 292). Insights brought to the text are referenced with usually very careful footnotes which demonstrate that the reading list outlined in the introductory pages has been thoroughly digested and employed in the present work.

One aspect of this commentary could be viewed either as a strength or weakness, and that is the overtly American Christian theological background against which the Psalms are here studied. To an intellectually curious Christian enquirer, no doubt the connections made with the Eucharist (p. 171), saints (p. 159), and hymnody (pp. 356-7) will be enlightening and rewarding. Many of the contemporary U.S. concerns which are mentioned by means of reflections are more widely applicable than simply the U.S. or even potentially the West: frequent mention is made of "militant consumerism". While suggesting a particular bugbear of at least one of the authors, this nevertheless draws attention to the relevance of this text in

today's society. Finally, the language of faith is sometimes adopted, whether in terms of the "the church's confession of 'God's preferential option for the poor'" (p. 356) or Brueggemann's own confessional story (p. 522). Moments whereby the authors seem to desire to draw their reader into this shared confessional perspective are rare, although readers of a different faith tradition or none should be warned that some language risks blurring the boundaries between the "we" of the authors and the "we" that might also encompass expected readership (c.f. p. 466).

Such contributions no doubt make this intelligent, accessible, stylish, well-written, deeply learned, and broadly relevant book even more attractive to Christian ministers, from whom much excellent feedback about this commentary has been heard. It will make a valuable contribution to the shelves of any scholar who is content to be sympathetic to Christian faith perspectives. Moreover, it demonstrates much about the reception history of the Psalter in the Christian tradition. It is a commentary to be highly recommended for anyone who wishes to explore the Psalms, or for scholars of Psalms studies who wish to keep their reading abreast of important publications in this field.