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A God of Faithfulness : Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on His 60th Birthday

Jamie A. Grant

Alison Lo

Bethel University, alison-lo@bethel.edu

Gordon J. Wenham

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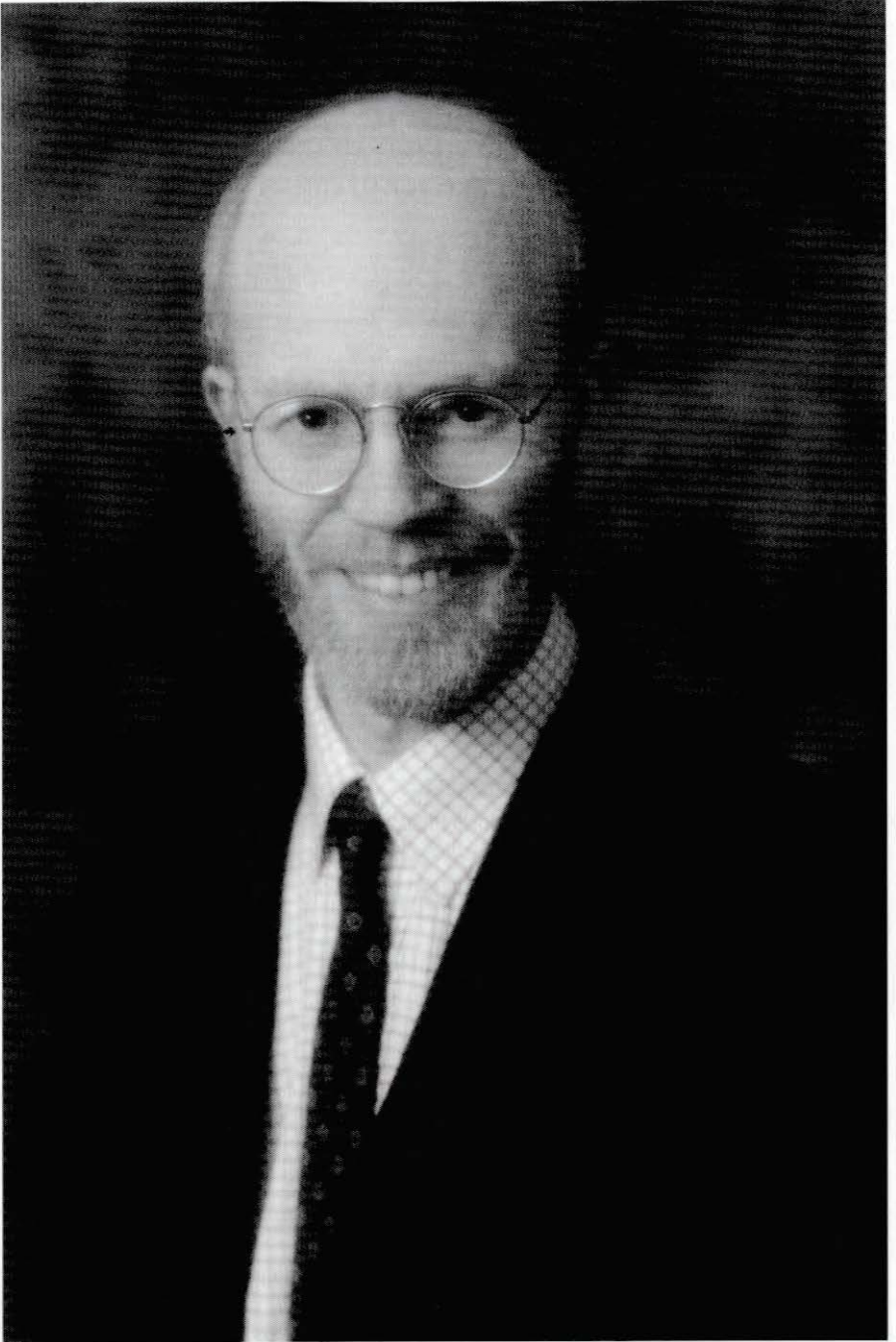
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A GOD OF FAITHFULNESS

**Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on
His 60th Birthday**

EDITED BY

Jamie A. Grant, Alison Lo

AND

Gordon J. Wenham



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CONTENTS

List of Contributors	vii
A Tribute to J. Gordon McConville	viii
Publications	x

Part I PENTATEUCH AND HISTORY

Chapter 1 IMAGES OF GOD AND CREATION IN GENESIS 1-2	3
<i>Karl Möller, University of Cumbria</i>	

Chapter 2 THE PASSOVER IN EXODUS AND DEUTERONOMY: AN INTRODUCTORY EXAMINATION	30
<i>Peter T. Vogt, Bethel Seminary</i>	

Chapter 3 THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NAZIRITE VOW	46
<i>Christine Hahn, Université de Genève</i>	

Chapter 4 RHETORICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL FEATURES OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH	61
<i>Herbert H. Klement, Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel</i>	

Part II PROPHETS

Chapter 5 JUDAH AS ISRAEL IN EIGHTH-CENTURY PROPHECY	81
<i>H.G.M. Williamson, University of Oxford</i>	

Chapter 6		
PAUL'S SELF-UNDERSTANDING IN THE LIGHT OF JEREMIAH: A CASE STUDY INTO THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT		96
<i>Hetty Lalleman, Spurgeon's College, London</i>		
Chapter 7		
'PROPHET TO THE NATIONS': MISSIONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH		112
<i>Christopher J.H. Wright, International Director, Langham Partnership International</i>		
Chapter 8		
REMNANT MOTIF IN AMOS, MICAH AND ZEPHANIAH		130
<i>Alison Lo, London School of Theology</i>		
Chapter 9		
THE THREE SHEPHERDS: READING ZECHARIAH 11 IN THE LIGHT OF JEREMIAH		149
<i>Michael R. Stead, Moore Theological College, Sydney</i>		
	Part III	
	POETRY	
Chapter 10		
THE GOLDEN CALF IN THE PSALMS		169
<i>Gordon J. Wenham, Trinity College, Bristol</i>		
Chapter 11		
THE HERMENEUTICS OF HUMANITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE HUMAN ORIGIN OF THE LAMENTS		182
<i>Jamie A. Grant, Highland Theological College UHI</i>		
Chapter 12		
'I WILL HOPE IN HIM': THEOLOGY AND HOPE IN LAMENTATIONS		203
<i>Heath Thomas, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary</i>		

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Jamie A. Grant is Vice Principal of the Highland Theological College UHI, Dingwall, Scotland, where he also teaches Biblical Studies.

Christine Hahn works in the Theology Faculty of the Université de Genève, Switzerland.

Herbert H. Klement is Professor of Old Testament at the Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel, Switzerland.

Hetty Lalleman is Lecturer in Old Testament at Spurgeon's College, London.

Alison Lo is Lecturer in Old Testament at London School of Theology.

Karl Möller is Senior Lecturer in Old Testament at the University of Cumbria.

Michael R. Stead is Rector of St James Anglican Church, Turramurra, and visiting lecturer in Old Testament at Moore Theological College, Sydney.

Heath A. Thomas is Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina and Fellow in Old Testament Studies at the Paideia Centre for Public Theology in Ontario, Canada.

Peter T. Vogt is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Gordon J. Wenham is Emeritus Professor of Old Testament at the University of Gloucestershire and research supervisor in Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol.

Hugh G.M. Williamson is Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford University, on the faculty of the Oriental Institute, and a Fellow of the British Academy.

Christopher J.H. Wright is the International Director of the Langham Partnership International which is based in London but works throughout the world.

A TRIBUTE TO J. GORDON McCONVILLE

The idea of dedicating a Festschrift to Gordon McConville on the occasion of his 60th birthday came to mind in the summer of 2007 and work on this project has been continuing ever since. The age of 60, to some people, may seem a bit 'young' to merit a Festschrift. However, we hope that this volume will serve as a stimulus to encourage Gordon to continue his significant contribution to biblical scholarship while still in the first flush of youth! This collection incorporates 12 essays written by his colleagues, friends and former research students, addressing key interpretative issues in Pentateuch, History, Prophets and Poetry. The breadth of subject-matter discussed in this volume merely reflects Gordon's own wide-ranging research interests.

Now is not the time for a comprehensive biography of Gordon's life but a brief sketch will bring out something of Gordon's various 'personae' as scholar, colleague, teacher and friend. Gordon was born and raised in Lurgan, Northern Ireland. He and his wife Helen have four grown-up children and are now at the stage of enjoying the fun of being grandparents. After studying Modern Languages (French and German) at Cambridge (Emmanuel College) and Theology at Edinburgh (New College), Gordon undertook PhD studies at Queen's University, Belfast, focusing on cultic laws in Deuteronomy. A little-known fact is that Gordon McConville was Gordon Wenham's first doctoral student (the first of many, it has to be said!). In Wenham's eyes, Gordon was 'a very diligent, thorough student, who did not require much guidance, just the sort you need when you are supervising the first time'. After earning his PhD degree, Gordon taught Old Testament at Trinity College, Bristol (1980–89) and Wycliffe Hall in Oxford (1989–95).

To deal with their growing number of research students in OT, Gordon McConville was invited to join the Theology and Religious Studies Department of the University of Gloucestershire (formerly Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education) as a Senior Lecturer in 1995, becoming Professor of Old Testament Theology in 2002. It was in Cheltenham, at the University of Gloucestershire, that 'the Gordons' (Wenham and McConville) came to work together as colleagues. During the late 1990s numbers of research students in Cheltenham were well into double figures, making it one of the largest groups of OT research students in the UK. Looking back, Wenham comments, 'I never

remember any awkwardness in him as a colleague. He was always helpful and obliging. He even took over two of the students who did not like my style of supervising and guided them to a successful conclusion’.

Over the past 30 years, Gordon has successfully supervised more than 20 PhD students to completion. Each of these graduates can testify to Gordon’s tireless efforts in mentoring, advising and guiding them to successful completion. We firmly believe that he has set an example worthy of emulation through his own disciplined research, his unyielding integrity and his determination never to shirk the difficult questions of biblical investigation. As a teacher, he was always available to give wise counsel, to discuss research or to brainstorm ideas, and his academic rigour was always matched by a gentleness, kindness and graciousness of personality that made up for the copious amounts of ‘red pen’. Gordon’s scholarship is also marked by a strong degree of humility. He openly (and, sometimes, generously) comments on how much he learns from his students. And this willingness to listen and openness to new perspectives builds a bridge of friendship that is often missing from the doctoral supervisor-student relationship. His sense of humour is dry and witty and his students have found in Gordon not only an excellent teacher and mentor, but also a firm friend.

The title of this volume, *A God of Faithfulness*, comes from Gordon’s ‘beloved’ Deuteronomy (Deut. 32.4). It is this God who is always the central focus of Gordon’s life, as family man, scholar and churchman. Gordon’s desire to respond to the faithfulness of God is revealed in his own devotion to scholarship and in his desire to fulfil this calling by bringing greater light to our understanding of the Scriptures. The way he has touched and inspired many lives to this end leaves a lasting legacy. With gratitude for his contributions to biblical scholarship and in anticipation of the fruit that his current and future endeavours will bear, we dedicate this Festschrift to Gordon McConville. It is but a small token of our sincere appreciation for his writing, teaching, friendship and support throughout the years.

Jamie A. Grant
Alison Lo
Gordon J. Wenham
Easter 2010