

Preface

The introduction to this volume explains the genesis of the present project, so I will not repeat that information here. I will deal with some little technical issues before taking this opportunity to express my thanks to those who made this volume possible.

Because of the number of texts under consideration in this volume, I have decided to use a base modern English translation for citations of Scripture, the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Unless stated explicitly, the translation used will be from the NASB. At times, I will slightly modify the NASB ("NASB, modified"), usually to render it in a more gender-inclusive way. At others, I will use my own translation ("my translation") or other modern translations (for example, TNIV, NRSV) that reflect my reading of the original text.

All abbreviations in this book conform to the *SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (ed. Patrick H. Alexander et al.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999). Versification follows the Hebrew tradition (see BHS), although the versification used in most non-Jewish English translations is also provided in square brackets [].

I want to express my gratitude first to Jim Eisenbraun for accepting this large tome for publication by his esteemed publishing house. I am thankful also to his editorial team at Eisenbrauns, especially Amy Becker, who spent countless hours conforming a large manuscript to the house style and making many helpful suggestions and revisions that have made this a better book in terms of quality of expression and accuracy of information.

My host institution, McMaster Divinity College, provided research time and support that made this project possible. I am grateful to the Senate and Board at the Divinity College for providing a research leave during the fall semester of 2006, which freed me to write this book. I am thankful to the Senate and Board for their affirmation of research and writing and provision of research assistance and professional funds to test my research among my peers in the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible guild. I am also grateful for my superb research assistant, Ms. Mary Conway, who pored over later drafts of this book. Her partnership is exemplary of the kind of academic collegiality that I have enjoyed with my students, who have studied with me over the past six years here at McMaster. Throughout the book, I make reference to rich conversation with several of my graduate students. I have found their fellowship an incredible encouragement and have appreciated the times they had the courage to advance a counterproposal and so forced me to rethink and, at times, to revise my own position.

It is the gift of academic friendship and collegiality that has been the most satisfying dimension of life within the academy. One of my desires has been to create an environment of academic hospitality within my own learning communities, one in which people are free to share with one another new insights within a safe space where ideas will be affirmed and challenged, so that we might together advance toward greater clarity and precision in our theological reflection. I learned this kind of academic hospitality early on in my academic journey from one who began as my teacher, exciting me about the study of the Old Testament, and then became a key mentor, taking the time to help me make the transition first to doctoral studies and then to full participation in the guild and to publishing my work. Along the way, he became a dear friend, always with a word of encouragement and interest in my life. So I am dedicating this book to my teacher, mentor, and friend Tremper Longman III, whose encouragement has made a volume of this character possible.

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*Ego ex eorum numero me esse profiteor qui scribunt proficiendo,
et scribendo proficient*
Augustinus Epistle cxliii.2 via Ioannes Calvinus