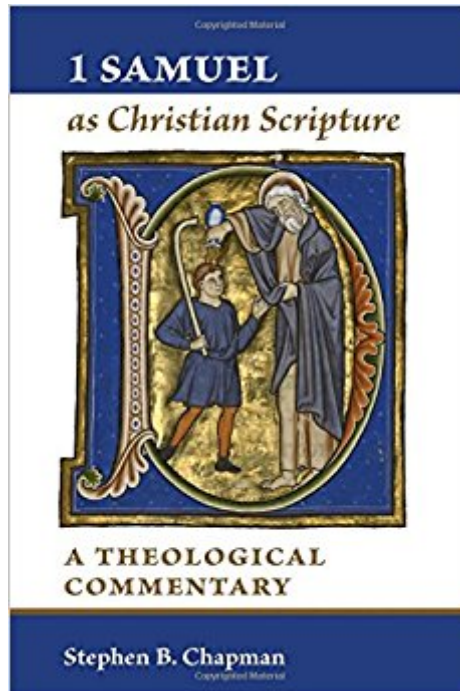




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# 1 Samuel As Christian Scripture: A Theological Commentary



## Synopsis

This work by Stephen Chapman offers a robustly theological and explicitly Christian reading of 1 Samuel. Chapman's commentary reveals the theological drama at the heart of that biblical book as it probes the tension between civil religion and vital religious faith through the characters of Saul and David.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Review of Biblical Literature "Well written and researched from beginning to end." Brent A. Strawn â Emory University "Many people talk about theological interpretation of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture, but Stephen Chapman does it with style and a beautiful pen and makes it look easy. Rarely have I been so moved, informed, and delighted as I was in reading this book. Chapman's exposition of 1 Samuel as treating the threat that civil religion poses to genuine heart piety, his negotiation of matters historical and literary and theological, and his bibliography (is there anything he hasn't read?) are simply remarkable. And his christological reading of the tragedy of King Saul? Absolutely stunning." Gary A. Anderson â University of Notre Dame "The account of David's rise to kingship has long been a theme of contemporary biblical scholarship, but the results of recent work have been rather thin on the theological side. This work is a major course correction on that front. Chapman helps the reader ponder anew the theological and literary issues that lay at the heart of Israel's transition to kingship in general and the reign and legacy of David in particular." Walter Moberly â Durham University "Stephen Chapman combines

his deep knowledge of the scholarly literature and critical issues with lucid sophistication to propose a fresh way ahead. The result is a creative and theologically thought-provoking reading of 1 Samuel. Scholars and preachers alike will find illumination here." Joel S. Kaminsky â" Smith College

"Informed by astonishingly wide learning, Chapman has produced a sophisticated theological reading of 1 Samuel that is deeply attuned to the literary dimensions of the text but also responsible to the highest canons of historical-critical scholarship. Scholars, clergy, and lay readers alike will find their reading of 1 Samuel immensely enriched by Chapman's thought-provoking and highly engaging book."

Stephen B. Chapman is associate professor of Old Testament at Duke Divinity School, director of graduate studies in religion at Duke University, and an ordained American Baptist minister.

This will be an excellent resource for my library for years to come!

“What emerges from my own literary exploration of 1 Samuel is the importance of the spiritual relationship between God and Israel, especially Israel’s leaders. The book of 1 Samuel does not merely detail the historical beginnings of the Israelite monarchy. It tells how the origin of the monarchy presented Israel with a challenge to its fundamental allegiance to God, a challenge represented above all by the twin threats of expedient politics and formulaic worship. Indeed, the book’s emphasis on personal piety subverts its ostensible description of the institutionalization of religion in the form of a monarchy. Saul proves unfit for the true task of leadership, while David rises to the occasion” (page 237). The above quote, appearing towards the end of the book, nicely encapsulates the vision of Chapman’s commentary. Through a patient close reading of the narrative of 1 Samuel, and informed by a wealth of primary- and secondary-literature, Chapman brings out the theological struggle at the heart of the book and how that same struggle confronts the people of God today. The commentary is divided into three parts. The first part, "Reading 1 Samuel as a Book," is a wide-ranging discussion that touches on issues hermeneutical, historical, and literary--raising questions like "What does it mean to read 1 Samuel as a book? What does the existence of Judges and 2 Samuel mean for the reading of 1 Samuel? How do categories of 'history' and 'literature' relate?" I personally found this section to be quite demanding because I was unfamiliar with many of the topics and debates he addressed, but I still found it beneficial because it gave me plenty of new things to think about. The second part, "Reading 1 Samuel Closely," is the heart of the book in that it contains Chapman’s close reading of the 1

Samuel narrative. He doesn't go verse-by-verse, but instead works carefully through the narrative, inspecting characters and their actions. I found this section to read very smoothly, even novel-like at times. For example, the scene with the nation's request for a king in 1 Sam 8 and God's surprising accommodation is carefully turned over and over, each angle patiently inspected to see how the rise of the monarchy is a mixed-attitude request. Or when David flees to Gath and acts insane in 1 Sam 21, Chapman takes care to show how David's madness may or may not differ from Saul's frequent bouts of insanity, and what that shows about David's character. His attention to the narrative's details is exciting and thought-provoking, even when he discusses the minutiae of things like textual variants between the Hebrew and Greek text of 1 Samuel. And in the footnotes he even regularly cites literature and sermons (John Henry Newman appears regularly) to good effect. The third part, "Reflecting on History and Theology," again reaches deep and wide by covering topics such as connections with Deuteronomy, notions of "personal faith" in the Old Testament, 1 Samuel as a tragedy, and the relationship of Saul/David with Jesus and Christians. The closing section, "Samuel and Jesus," is a fantastic discussion of the ways Jesus and David have been related in Christian thought (whether typologically or analogously). The high point is how Chapman, with the aid of Karl Barth, helps rehabilitate the relationship between Jesus and Saul, as well as allowing Saul to serve as a positive example of the challenge of living faithfully before God. This commentary will prove valuable to ministers/teachers for Chapman's close reading of the 1 Samuel narrative and his theologically astute observations. But I believe this book will best serve graduate students/professors of the Old Testament and theological interpretation of scripture for its advanced and robust discussion of 1 Samuel (and for the book's enormous bibliography). Note: this product review draws on an earlier review posted on my personal blog:

<https://decipheringfire.wordpress.com/2016/08/20/1-samuel-as-christian-scripture/>

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