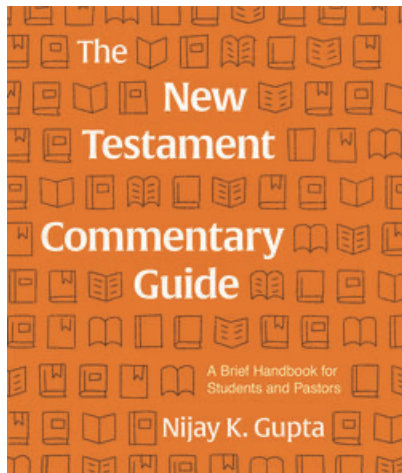


RBL 12/2021



Nijay K. Gupta

The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors

Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. Pp. 135. Paper. \$18.99.
ISBN 9781683594178.

Vien V. Nguyen, SCJ
Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

Navigating a maze of biblical commentaries in print for one's particular needs and purposes can easily become time-consuming and overwhelming. Nijay K. Gupta, research professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary, makes the job easier for pastors, students, and serious readers of the New Testament with his expert guidance on choosing or consulting reliable, resourceful commentaries. The book is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, "Introduction," Gupta begins with a brief yet beneficial overview of the history of biblical commentaries and the reasons for reading new ones. He reminds readers not to use commentaries as replacements for reading and studying the Bible. Cautioning the use of free online commentaries, Gupta encourages readers to ask questions about the author's credibility, the publisher's reputation, and endorsement by respected academics. He also briefly discusses commentaries by pastors, one-volume commentaries, single-author commentary series, and study Bibles. Other introductory notes orient new users toward the effective use of commentaries. Gupta then lists the influential New Testament commentary series (e.g., Anchor Yale Bible Commentary, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Black's New Testament Commentary). For each series, arranged alphabetically, Gupta provides the name of the current series editor(s), a concise description, reading level (technical, semitechnical, nontechnical), theological orientation (evangelical, confessional, nonconfessional/theological), methods of exegesis (historical, literary, theological), affordability (moderate, expensive), and some additional notes.

It would have been helpful to know Gupta's criteria for determining and evaluating the major commentary series. In addition to these "tried and true" modern commentaries,

published from 1980 to the present, he might consider the inclusion of other trusted resources for Bible studies that will benefit users: the Revised Expositor's Bible Commentary (REBC) and the New American Commentary (NAC). Eerdmans Critical Commentary (ECC) and Blackwell Bible Commentary (BBC) are relatively recent series and have published several New Testament volumes. They are outstanding and stimulating. Moreover, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS) can aid contemporary readers in (re)acquainting themselves with the thoughts and key writings of the early church fathers. The Baylor Handbooks on the Greek New Testament (BHGNT), although not a commentary series in the traditional sense, is also a valuable supplement. However, Gupta explains that his intent is "not to be comprehensive, but rather *selective*" (40) and that he is "not familiar with every commentary and series in print" (106). Concerning purchasing complete commentary sets or individual volumes, Gupta suggests buying only the best individual volumes, rather than an entire series, to acquire a more excellent library collection. The quality of scholarship and the depth of coverage in each series vary from one volume to another. It is worth noting that Gupta challenges readers to read commentaries written by authors outside of their preferences, traditions, and cultures to broaden their theological horizons (5). He also encourages them not to read commentaries only to bolster their theological understanding but also to grow in their faith (5).

In the second chapter, "Commentary Recommendations," Gupta provides personal recommendations for each New Testament book, categorizing each volume according to these classifications: technical, semitechnical, nontechnical, and hidden gems. He offers a survey of each commentary, highlighting its strengths and the author's background and areas of expertise. Although the authors and commentaries listed are stellar, readers might benefit from some other important works, such as Robert H. Gundry (Eerdmans) and D. A. Carson (EBC) on Matthew, James R. Edwards (PNTC) and Robert H. Stein (BECNT) on Mark, Michael Wolter on Luke, Andreas J. Köstenberger (BECNT) on John, Eckhard Schnabel (ZECNT) and David G. Peterson (PNTC) on Acts, Thomas Schreiner (BECNT) and Colin G. Kruse (PNTC) on Romans, Ronald Y. K. Fung (NICNT) on Galatians, Peter T. O'Brien (PNTC) on Ephesians. In each of the four classifications, Gupta recommends books to add to one's theological library. Gupta also includes a shortlist of commentaries authored by women and people of color. Readers sensitive to diverse voices in biblical study and interpretation will appreciate his acknowledgment of their contribution to biblical scholarship and his recommendation of these works. The appendices include: (1) a shortlist of recommended commentaries; (2) recommended commentaries in German and French for doctoral students and academic researchers; and (3) Gupta's works in New Testament studies, accompanied with brief descriptions. Readers will appreciate the endnotes, which contain helpful web addresses that enable readers to look for more details about

commentary series and books. Some might find the series abbreviations placed in parenthesis after each author's name unhelpful. Gupta could have done his readers a great service by including a list of these abbreviations.

As I said, Gupta writes with preaching pastors, theological students, and serious New Testament readers in mind, guiding them to trusted resources for sermon preparation, research, and study. Although not as comprehensive and evaluative as D. A. Carson's *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 7th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013) or John F. Evan's *A Guide to Biblical Commentaries and Reference Works*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), Gupta's book serves his intended audience well. It provides concise, user-friendly, and up-to-date access to the most important commentaries on New Testament books. Gupta offers a balanced, sensible assessment of each of the commentary series and individual commentaries. I highly recommend it.