

A Compact Guide to the Whole Bible: Learning to Read Scripture's Story edited by Robert W. Wall and David R. Nienhuis. 2015. Published by Baker Academic (Grand Rapids, Michigan). \$15.70

The genesis of *A Compact Guide to the Whole Bible: Learning to Read Scripture's Story* is with the School of Theology of Seattle Pacific University (Free Methodist tradition). The ten contributors are all faculty members of Seattle Pacific University, who argue that their "...students must be *introduced* to the Bible, for it is a huge book incorporating a rich and complex story" (pg. 7). As a result, they produced a short "guide" to provide just enough information to prepare students to read the Bible itself (hence the sub-title).

The book is divided into eight canonical sub-units:

1. The Beginning of the Story (*Genesis - Deuteronomy*)
2. The Story of Israel in (and out of) the Land (*Joshua - Esther*)
3. The Witness of Israel's Poets and Sages (*Job - Song of Songs*)
4. The Witness of Israel's Prophets (*Isaiah - Malachi*)
5. Israel in Waiting (*The Time Between the Two Testaments*)
6. The Story of Jesus (*Matthew - John*)
7. The Story of the Church (*Acts and the Letters*)
8. The Story's Conclusion (*The Revelation to John*)

These canonical sub-units are drawn together by a *metanarrative*, which the book's glossary defines as, "A grand, overarching story that takes a group of smaller, different stories and provides a framework for understanding how they all fit together" (pg. 166) The contributors would argue that in order to read (and teach) the Bible well one needs to understand how all the books of the Bible are connected to one another.

Each of the eight chapters that are devoted to large canonical sub-units follow the same structure:

1. The Story: Contribution to the Metanarrative
2. The Shape of the Story: Arrangement and Placement
3. The Style of the Story: Literary Features
4. The Specifics: What to Watch For (followed by three theological questions)
 - A. What do we learn about God?
 - B. What do we learn about being God's people?
 - C. What do we learn about God's world?

I found this book helpful and recommended it as the Northwestern Ohio Synod's Book of the Year for 2019: *The Year of Scripture*. I believe the contributors were successful in their stated goal of providing a guide to help us read and reflect on Scripture. I give *A Compact Guide to the Whole Bible: Learning to Read Scripture's Story* a 4.5 out of 5.