

Review of Biblical Literature Publication Policies

- 1. Reviewer Assignments:** The *RBL* editorial board has the final discretion in assigning reviews. In order to secure the most qualified reviewers for each work submitted, they adhere to the following policies.
 - a. When a review copy becomes available, an *RBL* editor first offers it for review to a scholar with recognized expertise in the subject matter of the book. Editors repeat this process until at least two such scholars have been offered a book for review.
 - b. If two editor-identified scholars decline the invitation to review a book, an editor *may* offer the book for review to a volunteer.
 - c. Only SBL members who have earned a terminal degree (e.g., Ph.D.) or are in the dissertation stage of such studies are eligible to volunteer to review a book for *RBL*. Volunteers are required to state their credentials qualifying them to review in *RBL*'s online volunteer form (<http://bookreviews.org/volunteer.asp>).
 - d. If a volunteer is a scholar whose expertise in a book's subject matter is already known to an editor, an editor may accept the volunteer offer without first offering the book to two nonvolunteers.
- 2. Editorial Approval:** All *RBL* reviews are carefully vetted to ensure that they conform to *RBL*'s publication standards.
 - a. After a review is submitted, an *RBL* staff member checks it to ensure that it meets the most basic requirements (e.g., length, file format). Any review that fails to meet these requirements is returned to the reviewer for revision.
 - b. Each review that meets the basic requirements is assigned to a member of the *RBL* editorial board, whose task it is to verify that the content of the review is scholarly, informative, and fair. If a review is deficient in any of these areas, the assigned editor also works with the reviewer to revise it as necessary.
 - c. Once a review is approved for publication by an *RBL* editor, *RBL*'s managing editor copyedits it and prepares it for publication, while also verifying one final time that the review meets *RBL*'s publication standards.
- 3. Publication Standards:** Only those reviews that meet the following standards will be published.
 - a. Ideally, a review will be 1,000–1,500 words in length. If a review requires greater detail than the length limit allows, a reviewer should alert the managing editor of the need to write a longer review. In most cases, reviews shorter than 1,000 words will be returned for expansion.
 - b. A review should contain, at the minimum, an informative summary of a book's contents and argument (often chapter by chapter) as well as scholarly interaction with its strengths and weaknesses. A review of a collection of essays should offer

- a brief (two- to three-sentence) summary of each essay as well as an overall assessment of a book's contribution to the field. Reviews of later editions should not only summarize and interact with the book but also identify how this edition differs from a previous edition.
- c. Reviewers are free to register disagreement with the views of a work, but not at the expense of providing a substantive summary of the book. As a rule of thumb, one should devote two-thirds of a review to informing readers of what the book contains before ending with personal assessment.
 - d. The review must not contain personal or ad hominem attacks. A negative review does not constitute a personal attack, but it does require special care to ensure that the criticism is fair and fact-oriented.
 - e. The review should follow *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* and be saved either as a Microsoft Word document with a .doc extension or in Rich Text Format with an .rtf extension.