



## *Review of Biblical Literature Guidelines*

The *Review of Biblical Literature* (*RBL*), a publication of SBL Press, presents reviews of books in biblical studies and related fields. Published digitally on [SBL Central](#) and in an annual print edition, *RBL* is comprehensive, international, and timely.

1. **Volunteering to Review:** Current SBL members can volunteer to review eligible recent books on SBL Central.
  - 1.1. To volunteer to review a book for *RBL*, a member should first log in on SBL Central using the email address and password tied to his or her SBL membership (i.e., the same login credentials used on the main [SBL website](#)).
  - 1.2. Books available for review will be indicated by a “Volunteer to Review This Title” option after the Description on the book detail page. Books are generally eligible for review within three years of publication. If the “Volunteer to Review This Title” option does not appear, even on a recent book, this means that a book has either already been assigned to a reviewer or is not eligible for review in *RBL*.
  - 1.3. By default, SBL Central displays listings for both conference papers and books, including those with or without reviews or available review copies. To search only for books available for review, enter a search term and then use the “Books & Reviews” filter on left sidebar, followed by the “Only Books Available for Review” filter.
  - 1.4. Only SBL members who have earned a terminal degree (e.g., PhD) 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 an appropriate section of the volunteer form on SBL Central.
  - 1.5. Volunteers will be notified by email whether or not they have been selected to review a book, but this usually takes place once all available review copies have been assigned. Since the process of assigning books for review (as detailed in the next section) can take several months, volunteers should not expect an immediate response.
2. **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, the board adheres to the following policies.
  - 2.1. 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.

2.2. If two editor-identified scholars decline the invitation to review a book, an editor *may* offer the book for review to a volunteer.

2.3. If a volunteer is a scholar whose expertise in a book's subject matter is already known, an editor may accept the volunteer offer without first offering the book to two nonvolunteers.

**3. Review Instructions:** Only reviews that meet the following standards will be published.

3.1. Ideally, a review will be 1,250–1,750 words in length. If a review is expected to exceed 2,000 words, 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 not be published.

3.2. 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.

3.3. Quotations from the book under review should not replace critical summarization and synthesis and should thus be kept to a minimum. Such quotations should be cited by page number. References to other works should include enough information to allow easy location of the work being referenced.

3.4. 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.

3.5. 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.

3.6. Please include within the review your name as you would like it to appear and your institutional affiliation (if any) or the city in which you reside.

3.7. The review should follow the second edition of *The SBL Handbook of Style* and be saved as a Microsoft Word document with a .doc or .docx extension or in Rich Text Format with an .rtf extension. When rendering an ancient language, use a Unicode-compliant font. See [http://www.sbl-site.org/Resources/Resources\\_BiblicalFonts.aspx](http://www.sbl-site.org/Resources/Resources_BiblicalFonts.aspx) for further resources for ancient language fonts.

3.8. When the book is sent, you will receive an email with a web link to a page where you may upload your review. Reviews should be submitted directly to the website using this link. If you have difficulty uploading the review on the website, contact the Managing Editor ([rbladministrator@sbl-site.org](mailto:rbladministrator@sbl-site.org)).

3.9. The email referenced at 3.8 will also list the date on which your review is due. You are welcome to request an extension of that date by emailing the Managing Editor at [rbladministrator@sbl-site.org](mailto:rbladministrator@sbl-site.org).

4. **Editorial Approval and Publication:** All *RBL* reviews are carefully vetted to ensure that they conform to *RBL*'s publication standards.
  - 4.1. After a review is submitted, an *RBL* staff member checks it to ensure that it meets the basic requirements (e.g., length, file format). Any review that fails to meet these requirements is returned to the reviewer for revision.
  - 4.2. 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.
  - 4.3. Once a review is approved for publication by an *RBL* editor, an *RBL* Managing Editor copyedits it and prepares it for publication, while also verifying one final time that the review meets *RBL*'s publication standards.
  - 4.4. Given the high volume of reviews that *RBL* processes (over five hundred per year), please allow **five to six months** for publication on SBL Central.
  
5. **Author Responses:** On occasion an author of a book that has been reviewed will be dissatisfied with that review and want the opportunity to respond. All such complaints should be directed to the *RBL* General Editor and Managing Editor.
  - 5.1. The first step in evaluating how best to deal with the situation is to determine whether the complaint is due to (1) misrepresentation of the author or his or her work, (2) a difference of opinion between the author and the reviewer, or (3) a perception that the review is deficient in some respect.
  - 5.2. If misrepresentation is claimed, the author will be asked to document specific instances in the review (ideally, cross-referenced to the book). If misrepresentation is demonstrated to the satisfaction of *RBL* personnel, the reviewer will be instructed to correct the review or to have it unpublished (removed from the website and replaced by a notice that the review is no longer available).
  - 5.3. If the author claims a difference of opinion with the reviewer or that the reviewer's work is deficient, the author will be invited to submit a response to *RBL*'s General and Managing Editor, who will ensure that it contains no personal or ad hominem attacks and represents the review and reviewer fairly (as best can be determined). Upon acceptance, the response will be posted either on the *RBL* blog or in PDF form at a link accessible from the *RBL* blog. Finally, *RBL* staff will link from the book page for the book under review to the blog post listing the book and author response.
  - 5.4. Once an author response has been posted and appropriately linked, *RBL* will announce at the top of the following *RBL* newsletter that author X has responded to the review of his or her book at BLOG.POST.URL.
  - 5.5. Reviewers are not given a special opportunity to reply to an author's response, although they, like other *RBL* readers, are free to leave a comment on the *RBL* blog. Such comments are moderated, so there is no guarantee of publication.

For additional questions, please contact the *RBL* Managing Editor at [rbladministrator@sbl-site.org](mailto:rbladministrator@sbl-site.org).