



# themelios

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**THE GOSPEL COALITION**

— OLD TESTAMENT —

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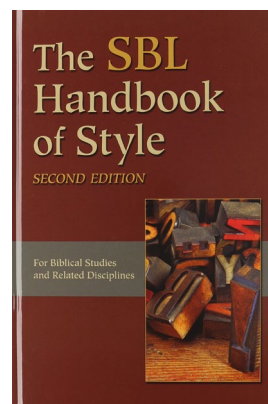
*The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. 351 pp. £26.37/\$\$39.95.

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*The SBL Handbook of Style* (SBLHS) has become the standard guide for biblical studies. It first released in 1999, and the second edition released in November 2014. This handbook is particularly noteworthy for *Themelios* since it serves as the standard for our journal's style. While copy-editing all of the issues of *Themelios* from 2008 to 2014, I referred to the first edition of SBLHS hundreds if not thousands of times.

John F. Kutsko, SBL Executive Director, explains what's new in the second edition in its preface:

In addition to corrections, the revisions to the second edition of *The SBL Handbook of Style* are fivefold. First, this edition includes carefully selected stylistic changes based on the review and recommendation of the editorial board members and consultants. . . . Second, the new edition supplements and updates several areas. Third, the handbook has filled in gaps of coverage or added new sections. Fourth, the handbook has reordered chapters and moved the appendixes into the body of the handbook. Fifth, . . . [it] contains more complete information and requires less consultation of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. (p. xii)



I won't review the entire SBLHS here since this is a second edition. Instead, I'll highlight what I think are noteworthy additions and rule changes in this second edition.

1. *Additions*. The second edition is more clear, comprehensive, and organized. It is more up-to-date on how to cite electronic resources, and it updates and expands many of the lists and discussions in the first edition. For example, the section titled "Secondary Sources: Journals, Major Reference Works, and Series" (§8.4; pp. 171–260) is 26 pages longer in the second edition than the first. Yet SBLHS still fails to include some secondary sources that belong in this list such as *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (InterVarsity Press and Inter-Varsity Press), *Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans and Apollos), *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, and *Studies in Biblical Greek* (Lang). Also, one of the new secondary sources in the second edition is "BAFCS" for "The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting." Yet SBLHS keeps the old examples from the first edition that list *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting* in italics and not abbreviated (pp. 89–90, 106–7).

New to the second edition is an expanded section titled "Names of Presses" (§6.1.4.1; pp. 76–82), which gets only half a page in the first edition. This section helpfully specifies how one should cite the names of presses along with their place of publication. Here are some examples: Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press (not Downers Grove: IVP or merely InterVarsity), Leicester (or London): Inter-Varsity Press (not IVP or merely Inter-Varsity), Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (not Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), and Wheaton, IL: Crossway (not Wheaton: Crossway Books). The entry for Rowman & Littlefield lists the place as "Lanhan, MD," but should say, "Lanham, MD" (p. 81).

One more issue here: Unfortunately, the second edition does *not* change what it says in the first edition about referring to God with "bias-free language." "In many cases," advises SBLHS, "the



assignment of gender to God is best avoided” (§4.3.1; p. 21). “Avoid using unnecessary gender-specific pronouns in reference to the Godhead” (§4.3.4.3; p. 34). This rule seems to embrace a politically correct theology without sufficient warrant. Needless to say, *Themelios* does not follow *SBLHS* here.

2. *Rule Changes*. Six changes are worth highlighting: (a) Add an apostrophe plus an *s* to all possessive names, including Jesus’s and Moses’s (§4.1.6; pp. 16–17). (b) Abbreviate series and journal titles in the bibliography as well as notes (§6; p. 70). See the below table for examples. (c) In notes, place the basic facts of publication (city, publisher, and date) *within* parentheses and all secondary publication information *outside* parentheses (§§6.2–6.4; pp. 84–108). The following table shows some examples:

Notes		Bibliography	
<i>SBLHS</i> 1st ed.	<i>SBLHS</i> 2nd ed.	<i>SBLHS</i> 1st ed.	<i>SBLHS</i> 2nd ed.
Douglas J. Moo, <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 25.	Douglas J. Moo, <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> , NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 25.	Moo, Douglas J. <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> . New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.	Moo, Douglas J. <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> . NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 611.	Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 611.	Seifrid, Mark A. “Romans.” Pages 607–94 in <i>Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.	[same]
Jason S. DeRouchie, “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor,” <i>BBR</i> 14 (2004): 188.	[same]	DeRouchie, Jason S. “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor.” <i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i> 14 (2004): 175–203.	DeRouchie, Jason S. “Circumcision in the Hebrew Bible and Targums: Theology, Rhetoric, and the Handling of Metaphor.” <i>BBR</i> 14 (2004): 175–203.

(d) Use two-letter postal abbreviations rather than traditional state abbreviations (§8.1.1; pp. 118–19). For example, Eugene, OR, not Eugene, Ore. (e) Use all caps without periods rather than small caps with periods for chronological eras (§8.1.2; p. 119). For example, BC and AD rather than B.C. and A.D. (f) Use all caps rather than small caps to abbreviate Bible translations (§8.2; pp. 121–24). For example, ESV or NIV rather than *ESV* or *NIV*.

While it's good news that the new handbook is comprehensive and well-organized, some bad news overwhelms it: SBL Press is not immediately making the second edition available electronically. The website states, "As with the first edition of the handbook, we anticipate the *SBL Handbook of Style* will be made available [as a PDF] to members on the SBL website. But as with the first edition, we do not expect that to take place for a number of years" ("Questions Regarding Digital Editions of the *SBLHS 2*," [http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHS2\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/pubs/SBLHS2_FAQ.pdf)).

This is bad news for those of us who have enjoyed owning the first edition as a PDF. I consulted the first edition far more frequently than I would have if I owned it only in print. Two main advantages of owning this handbook in PDF format stand out. (a) *You can quickly search a PDF*. I don't know how many hundreds of times I searched the PDF of the first edition to see if it specifies how to abbreviate a particular journal or reference work or series or whether I should capitalize a particular word. Now that I own the second edition only in print, what used to take me five seconds now takes about five or ten times longer. Or even longer than that since I don't always have my print copy within arm's reach. (b) *You can access a PDF anywhere without needing a physical book*. Like most modern professors who research and write, my fundamental tool is a computer. And where there's a computer, there's a way to store and access a PDF you own—whether you are in your home office, your living room, your bedroom, your work office, a classroom, a hotel, or an airplane.

The second edition of *SBLHS* is a good and necessary tool for academics who research and write about biblical studies and related disciplines. It significantly improves the first edition, and it will be even more useful when it is available electronically.

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