

Stevens, Gerald L. *New Testament Greek Workbook*, 2d ed. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997. 290 pp. Paper, \$21.00.

Stevens has revised his Greek workbook and provided a number of new features. There are new exercises, using new sentences, which have been revised and simplified. He has included a section on English derivatives as an aid to learning Greek vocabulary. Translation aids have been revised and put into a new section; and new charts, including word statistics, have been added. An answer key has been provided for odd-numbered exercises after lesson 3. Finally, there is a 26-page appendix summarizing key aspects of English grammar for those who are weak in grammar skills. Students should find this workbook very useful and helpful in learning Greek.

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Thiselton, Anthony C. *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. 191 pp. Paper, \$24.95.

Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self examines the postmodern condition of self via a Christian theology of promise in which personhood is grounded in the nature of God-as-Trinity and in his self-imparting love (ix, 71, 122). As postmodernity fragments the self and society into multiple role performances, and dissolves truth into mere conventions of power interests of competing communities, "promise" holds out the possibility of reintegration. In particular, the principle of the personhood of God-as-Trinity displays how self draws its full personhood from a dialectic of self-identity and relation to the "other." Ultimately, self-identity is to be located within the larger story of God's dealing with the world (x).

In developing his thesis, Thiselton perceptively compares and assesses modern and postmodern interpretations of the self and society on their own terms and in relation to Christian theology. In the process he critically engages key thinkers in philosophy, hermeneutics, and theology, including Nietzsche, Foucault, Ricoeur, Dilthey, Cupitt, Moltmann, and Pannenberg. His argumentation assumes a progression that is nicely outlined in four parts, each with six chapters. While the level of discussion can be rather "difficult" in places, there are sufficient conceptual bridges between chapters and sections to keep the nonprofessional reader engaged.

Part I focuses on issues of meaning, manipulation, and truth. Here Thiselton engages Nietzsche's notion that all that exists consists of manipulative interpretations of texts—i.e., truth-claims are mere interpretations and readily lend themselves as tools of self-interest, deception, and manipulation. While he affirms that a Christian account of human nature accepts the capacity of the self for self-deception and its readiness to use strategies of manipulation (13), he asserts that authentic Christian faith follows the paradigm of nonmanipulative love as expressed in the cross of Jesus Christ (16, 20-25). Furthermore, truth proves itself in relationships and thus has personal character (38). As truth found stable expression in the person, words, and deeds of Jesus Christ as the divine *Logos* (Jn

1-18), one can assert that truth entails a match of word and deed, of language and life, and that personal integrity gives meaning and credibility to words (36). The ground for truthful speech is a stable attitude of respect and concern for the other (37). This is a very constructive section that gives the reader not only a feel for the moral and philosophical issues concerning truth-claims as such, but forceful argumentation toward the possibility that some claims to truth, at least, can be valid and not mere manipulative interpretation. While we can affirm the relational "speech-acts" perspective of truth that Thiselton here develops, one misses a clear affirmation that behind the person who thus speaks truthfully lies any moral or spiritual truth that is indeed propositional and likewise confronts the self. One could intuit that the claims of Scripture are trustworthy because God is trustworthy, but Thiselton doesn't draw such a direct line.

A discussion of the hermeneutics of selfhood takes up Part II. Here "relationality" is seen as an important part of the process which makes self-understanding possible (50, 51). Who or what we "are" often emerges only as we interact with others (x). Thiselton affirms Schleiermacher's call to allow texts and persons to enter present understanding as *themselves* and not as some construct of our own devising (56), as well as Ricoeur's assertion that written texts represent the objectified self-expression of another self (60). Gadamer's model of dialogue and dialectic is likewise affirmed (70-77). In this light, Thiselton distinguishes five ways in which textual reading interprets the self—the most important for him being the reality that biblical reading has to do with transformation. Scripture shapes the identities of persons so decisively as to transform them (63-66). This transforming purpose of Scripture entails a hermeneutic of self; otherwise it does not lead to a new understanding of the self's identity, responsibility, and future possibilities of change and growth (66). One senses an existentialism and neoorthodox encounter-view of Scripture behind the arguments in this section. The question is whether or not his hermeneutic of selfhood is balanced by a broader theological framework that affirms Scripture as bringing content, as well as encounter. One is not sure. For the postmodern self, however, Thiselton is correct in affirming that, in order to be relevant, biblical reading has to do with transformation and that the existential is, at least, a proper starting point.

Part III moves to a discussion of postmodernity's interpretation of God. This section is, for the most part, an effective and very informative analysis and critique of Cupitt's nonrealist or nonobjective view of God (104) where one essentially comes to understand God through a reshaping of selfhood. Thiselton correctly asserts that because postmodern philosophy projects an elusive self or no substantial, individual self, there is really no longer any self within which "god" can be "internalized," (85) let alone objectified. Ultimately, God gets lost entirely in postmodernity's self. In the end, "rhetoric" is all that postmodernity has to offer.

In this context, Thiselton rightly argues that we come to understand God as God not when we engage in abstract discussions about Him, but when God addresses and encounters us in ways which involve, challenge, and transform the self, or at very least when we use self-involving logic (103).

Part IV begins by considering the problem that postmodernist approaches

decenter self, decenter ethics, and decenter society, thus giving rise to conflict, potential violence, and despair in society. Here Thiselton argues that the postmodern self, however, stands closer to biblical realism than the illusory optimism of modernity's self about human nature and society (130). Postmodern self can find hope, though, only in the context of a biblical theology of promise. In the context of promise, a new horizon is formed in which the postmodern self, which has "a constructed identity," can be "reconstituted."

For Thiselton, acting in the present on the basis of that which is yet to come constitutes a faith that has self-transforming effects. It transforms the self because it "reconstitutes self-identity" as no longer the passive victim of forces of the past which "situated" it within a network of pre-given roles and performances, but opens out a new future in which new purpose brings a "point" to its life. "

The self perceives a call and its value as one-who-is-loved within the larger narrative plot of God's loving purposes for the world, for society, and for the self" (160). The "image of Christ" assumes a fundamental role in relation to future promise. To be transformed into "the image of Christ" and to become "like him" constitute the heart of the divine promise which lifts the self out of its predefined situatedness and beckons from "beyond" to a new future (153).

This creative transformation comes through the Holy Spirit, who transposes self-interest into love for others and for the Other (154). The personhood of God-as-Trinity provides the framework for a dialectic of self-identity and relation to the "other." In spite of the excellent ideas in this section, Thiselton's theological development of promise, Holy Spirit, and the personhood of Trinity proves rather vague in comparison to the in-depth, philosophical discussions of earlier sections. His lack of specificity here, unfortunately, is in keeping with much of the current dialogue on either of these issues, and again reflects an existentialism and neo-orthodox perspective of Scripture. At the most, in his own terms, he reaches "toward a theology of promise." This is a significant discussion on the post-modern understanding of self, but the solutions it advances, while in principle correct, need more biblical structure and concreteness.

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Torrance, Thomas F. *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being, Three Persons*.
Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996. 272 pp. \$49.95.

As an example of doctrine-as-explanation (in contrast to, say, doctrine-as-grammar), Thomas Torrance's *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being, Three Persons* is a tour de force. Torrance, who is professor emeritus at the University of Edinburgh, is concerned that the Protestant doctrine of God no longer succumb to the tendency to wrongly conceive God's tri-unity *first* in terms of the divine essence and only *subsequently* in terms of the divine Persons (112). Torrance offers a two-fold conception of divine Being, as personal and perichoretic, to make this corrective.

Torrance begins with the insistence that the evangelical, or economic, trinity is identical with the immanent, or ontological, trinity (133). Thus, following Karl