

BOOK REVIEWS

Beale, G. K. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011, xxiv + 1047. Hardcover, \$54.99.

Gregory K. Beale, professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, has published a number of articles and books in the field of New Testament biblical theology. *A New Testament Biblical Theology* is the result of his more than twenty years of research, writing, and teaching. The book contains an introduction and ten sections, each composed of one or more chapters. The introduction and Part 1 are especially important for understanding the rest of the book.

In the introduction, Beale points out the uniqueness of his biblical theological approach by noting nine differences between his work and other NT theologies. For example, he organizes his work according to the storyline rather than by theological analysis or by major themes of the NT. He also focuses more on the unity of the NT than on its diversity, and examines how the OT storyline develops in Judaism in comparison to its development in the NT (5–15).

He also reveals three presuppositions that are foundational for his approach: (1) “the Protestant canon of the OT and the NT composes the divinely inspired, authoritative material for doing biblical theology”; (2) “allusions to earlier Scripture unpack the meaning of that earlier Scripture, and yet the earlier passage also sheds light on the later passage”; (3) and “the divine authorial intentions communicated through human authors are accessible to contemporary readers” (5).

In accordance with his presuppositions, Beale begins his demonstration of the reliance of the NT upon the OT by defining their respective storylines. He first proposes that

the Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his eschatological new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant, and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, unto his glory (163).

He then defines the NT storyline, proposing that

Jesus’s life, trials, death for sinners, and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God’s glory (163).

Each of the nine subsequent parts of the book then examines the particular elements of the redemptive-historical storyline, including the

eschatological great tribulation commencing in Jesus and the church, resurrection, the restoration of God's image in humanity, justification and reconciliation, the Spirit and the church as God's eschatological temple, the church as eschatological Israel, the distinguishing marks of Christianity and Judaism, and Christian living. The tenth part provides a final conclusion of the book.

In each chapter, Beale's pattern is to discuss the OT background of theological themes and trace their development in Jewish literature. Having illumined these two areas, he then works through all the relevant texts in the NT according to the presuppositions he described in the Introduction. Thus his presuppositions provide the exegetical structure upon which he examines each relevant theme.

By way of critique, Beale claims in the preface that his "book also may be used as a reference or encyclopedic source, since each chapter is written on one general theme that can be sufficiently understood independently from the rest of the book" (xii). However, I only partially agree with this. The introduction and Part 1 are especially crucial for understanding the author's approach and the book's fundamental ideas, because it is there that specific terminology is defined, as well as the grounding presuppositions. If a person reads only one chapter, without first becoming acquainted with these sections, he may find some parts confusing. Although the author introduces each chapter by providing a few sentences of information necessary for understanding the role of a particular chapter, the reader will not fully profit from reading only isolated chapters of the book because ultimately each chapter is built upon that which precedes it.

Second, although Beale claims Scripture should interpret itself, he is not completely consistent here. For example, in chapter 23 he wrestles with the question of why Christians observe Sunday instead of the Jewish Sabbath, acknowledging that not all Christians are in agreement with this change (776, n. 1). After exploring the OT and NT backgrounds of Sabbath observance, he concludes, (1) that the fourth commandment clarifies "Gen 2:3 as a creation mandate to humanity" (782), and (2) after an exegesis of Hebrews 3-4 that "if the weekly Sabbath included the function of pointing forward to the consummate rest, and that rest has not yet come, then that weekly Sabbath should continue" (789). However, while Beale acknowledges that there is no explicit exegetical or theological evidence supporting why Christians worship on Sunday rather than the Sabbath (799), the resurrection of Christ inaugurated a new creation and thus, by implication, a new day of worship. He finds support by referring to questionable exegetical interpretations of Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:2.

Aside from these minor critiques, this book is highly valuable because of its uniqueness among NT theologies. Without doubt, Beale is on the right track by pointing to the continuation of the storyline from the OT to the NT.

For a thorough understanding of the NT, it is, therefore, absolutely essential to know the already–not yet concept that is well described and applied by Beale. As a final remark, it is worth mentioning that the book is written in a style that can satisfy theologians, but which is still accessible to a well-trained lay person.

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DOMINIC BORNAND

Callen, Barry L. *Beneath the Surface: Reclaiming the Old Testament for Today's Christian*. Lexington: Emeth Press, 2012. 211pp. Paperback, \$32.00.

Barry L. Callen attempts to solve a formidable issue that has plagued Christians for centuries—namely, as the book's subtitle suggests, "Reclaiming the Old Testament for Today's Christian." The neglect of the "Foundational Testament," Callen proposes, helped to breed anti-Semitism, leading to the massacre of at least half of all Jews born since the crucifixion of Christ (7). Callen's goal is to find ways to unite two of Abraham's children, Christians and Jews, by retracing their ancient roots in the context of Yeshua (Jesus), the ultimate messianic hope (42).

Callen, editor of both the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* and Anderson University Press, is a staunch scholar with a "high view of scripture." His works include *Authentic Spirituality: Moving beyond Mere Religion* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2006); *Caught between Truths: The Central Paradoxes of Christian Faith* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2007); and a book he coauthored with Clark Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle: Reclaiming the Full Authority of the Bible* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2006). Callen's thought appears to have been baked in the oven of Biblical Theological scholarship, as is evidenced by his engagement with key scholars such as Gerhard von Rad (142, 149), Karl Barth (184), and Walter Brueggemann (52, 59, 140).

The book begins with an introduction, followed by thirteen chapters, which are divided into four sections. Callen begins by introducing two key points: First, the OT reader must go beneath the surface meaning of the text because this is where the deepest meaning lies; and, second, the OT reader must not forget that the person who does not embrace the Final or New Testament cannot fully understand the Foundational or Old Testament.

In order to further reduce the gap between Jewish and Christian symbols, Callen sometimes refers to YHWH as the "Water Source" (63), while Jesus is called Yeshua; the OT is referred to as the "Foundational Testament," and the NT is called the "Final Testament." Such renaming of persons and concepts, Callen hopes, will help to remove any hints of denigration, while simultaneously reclaiming the ancient Hebraic flavor of the OT.

Callen demonstrates how this gap might be bridged through the analogy of water, which he graphically illustrates on the book's cover. According to