

BOOK REVIEWS

Arnold, Brian J. *Justification in the Second Century*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018. xiv + 221 pp. Softcover. USD 39.95.

For decades, the consensus in historical and theological studies has been that the early centuries before Augustine have very little to offer regarding the development of the doctrine of justification and that, in fact, following T. F. Torrance's study (*The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* [Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1948]), second-century church fathers misunderstood Paul's doctrine of grace and "departed at once from a central tenet of Pauline Christianity" (13). In this recent publication, Brian J. Arnold, who is assistant professor of theology at Phoenix Seminary, bravely challenges this consensus.

After reviewing recent developments and studies of the Apostolic Fathers' thought on soteriology, Arnold seeks to answer, in a fresh way, these key questions: "How did the second-century fathers understand the doctrine of justification?" (4), "What happened to the doctrine of justification in the second century? Was it abandoned? Was it ignored?" (5–6). And Arnold answers succinctly in the introduction that it was neither abandoned or ignored, and that "Paul's influence extended into the second century, even when these fathers do not cite the Apostle directly" (6). The book attempts to demonstrate this conclusion, which he does with skill even if all doubts are not totally removed.

The five core chapters of the book review the evidence from the Apostolic Fathers beginning with 1 Clement, Clement of Rome's Letter to the Corinthians (18–35). Arnold first acknowledges the scholarly consensus that the letter's main theme is "living in accordance with biblical morality" (24) and advocates a moralism exemplified in the lives of many biblical characters, concluding that people are "justified by works and not by words" (1 Clem 30.3). However, he argues that the key hermeneutical passage of 1 Clement on the doctrine of justification is 32.3–4, where the author categorically states that people are not justified "through our own wisdom or through our understanding or through our piety or through our works which we did in holiness of heart, but through faith, through which the Almighty God justified all who existed from the earliest times." Arnold argues that, in this passage, 1 Clement breaks from a purely moralistic exposition "to comment on justification, as though he realized that his previous remarks could be mistakenly used to promote a works based salvation, a message he did not want to communicate to an already confused congregation" (25). This is Arnold's strongest argument: good works in 1 Clement serve as evidence of sincere faith, not to

garner salvation (28). Of all the solutions offered, he prefers J. B. Lightfoot's, who sees "*1 Clement* as a practical guide for bridging the gap between Paul and James" in the relationship between faith and works (31). Agreeing with Räsänen, Arnold also concludes that "the notion that justification through faith should lead to works of love is of course fully compatible with the theology of Paul" (32).

The next chapter focuses on the letters of Ignatius of Antioch and there Arnold takes on Torrance's thesis with more fervor (68–73). Arnold argues that Ignatius "has a great deal to say about soteriology" and "is compatible with Paul's view" on justification (36). As with *1 Clement*, the $\delta\upsilon\kappa$ -word group is infrequently used by Ignatius, the study is therefore broadened to look at other ways Ignatius spoke about salvation, in particular, what salvation is not, in his invective against the Judaizers (37). In three key passages (Ign. *Eph.* 6.1; Ign. *Magn.* 8.1; 9.1–2), Ignatius expresses clearly that one cannot be Christian and profess that he has received grace while advocating Jewish practices. "Assent to Jewish practices nullifies Christianity because it adds to salvation by grace" (53). And thus indirectly, according to Arnold, Ignatius concurs with Pauline theology on justification and concludes that "the Judaizers were harmful because they tainted Paul's message of grace" (55). On the positive side, Arnold sees Ignatius's repeated phrase "faith and love" as an echo of Paul's gospel of justification and love as the fruit of faith (70).

Chapter four discusses the anonymous epistle to Diognetus and Arnold extolls its "remarkable clarity with regard to the doctrines of justification and the [substitutionary] atonement" (77). In spite of its obscure history and unknown authorship, it "is the clearest evidence that the doctrine of grace neither disappeared nor diminished in the second century" (103). That not all scholars may think so positively about this document is evident in the fact that Torrance rarely mentioned it in his study (77). Yet, for Arnold, the document is clearly supporting Paul's doctrine of forensic justification. The *Epistle's* chapter nine contains "some of the clearest teachings on the atonement and justification in the Ante-Nicene church" (94), including language about the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner on the basis of faith alone and the substitutionary "sweet exchange" of guilt and unrighteousness for forgiveness and righteousness between the sinner and Christ.

The little-known document *The Odes of Solomon* is the focus of chapter five (104–153). While this document is also anonymous and from an unspecified time period and region, with almost no historical attestation in Church Fathers, Arnold accepts the limited evidence that it may be from the early second century and of Syrian origin, making it "one of the most ancient documents in the history of the church" (112). Three odes (17, 25, 29) are studied in this chapter to confirm that another second-century author held a clear forensic view of justification by faith in God's alien righteousness to save sinners. For Arnold, "the *Odes of Solomon* offers a unique glimpse into

the early church . . . to discover what the majority of Christians believed” (152) and sang about. All of which seem to have been influenced by a Pauline theology of justification and imputed righteousness.

The last second-century document examined is Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* and Arnold claims that few scholars “have taken the positive step of acknowledging that Justin held a view similar to the so-called ‘traditional’ Pauline view of justification” (182). Arnold focuses his discussion on four chapters of the *Dialogue with Trypho* (8, 23, 92, 137) in which he finds a view of justification very similar to that of Paul in his letters to the Romans and Galatians. He also understands that Justin’s treatment of the law and righteousness on the basis of works (circumcision), and his view of legalism in Judaism are all apparently divergent from what is claimed by scholars of the New Perspective on Paul (168–170) in their understanding of Second Temple Judaism. Arnold understands Justin to affirm that salvation is a gift of God’s mercy through faith in Christ, the Messiah, who fulfilled the Old Testament promises.

So, in conclusion, does Arnold succeed in challenging the consensus that second-century authors did not hold a clear Pauline view of forensic justification by faith?

The moralism of some of the Apostolic Fathers as shown in 1 Clement and the letters of Ignatius is hard to set aside. While Paul’s theology of justification may have been known and accepted by these Apostolic Fathers, to a great extent later generations of Christians after Paul in the early second century had begun to express their faith in some sort of traditional, defensive way, emphasizing morality and the excellent life. The moralism of the Apostolic Fathers makes sense, given the context in which they lived and the temporal distance from Paul. Their questions were not our questions. Did they acquiesce with Paul’s theology of justification? Most likely they did. But by then, it was more likely James’s understanding of the relationship between justification and faith, of living the life of faith, of good works demonstrating the evidence of faith, that dominated their thinking. While Arnold makes a good case to demonstrate that Paul’s views on justification are still in the background and part of the Apostolic Fathers’ soteriology, Torrance’s analysis is not invalidated and should not be too quickly set aside. As Arnold explains a few times, things are complicated and nothing is obvious.

But when it comes to his analysis of the Epistle to Diognetus, the Odes of Solomon and some chapters of Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, Arnold succeeds in demonstrating that these authors had a similar view of justification as Paul explained in his own letters—at least as Arnold understands it, forensic and somewhat Reformed. The collective evidence he presents is convincing. A doctrine of justification by faith apart from good works was preserved well into the second century and showed some continuity with the first century.

This study will certainly create some good conversations about justification and encourage further study into the doctrine of salvation in the early centuries of Christianity. This book is also a helpful supplement to Alistair E. McGrath's masterful study on justification, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and even to Michael Horton's recent contributions in volume 1 on *Justification*, *New Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

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DENIS FORTIN

Berman, Joshua A. *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xi + 307 pp. Hardcover. USD 99.00.

Currently, the extreme fragmentation in the field of Pentateuchal Theory has occasioned the publication of several attempts to bridge the gap between differing academic communities, producing new paradigms for the study of the compositional history of the Pentateuch (for e.g., Jan Christian Gertz, et al., eds., *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel and North America*, FAT 111 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016], 3). Inconsistency in the Torah represents a call for a more modest methodological agenda in regards to both the application of source critical methods for Pentateuchal composition studies and to the abounding speculative results of such methods in recent publications. In this regard, Joshua A. Berman's book stands in line with another forthcoming publication (see L. S. Baker, et al., eds., *Exploring the Composition of the Pentateuch I* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming]). The book is a major contemporary critique of source criticism's claims for literary consistency, proposing that ancient literary conventions do not align with modern critical expectations in terms of unity, readability, coherence and scientific precision. Berman urges scholars to pursue the integration of ancient literary conventions in the formulation of any serious compositional paradigm of the Pentateuch.

Berman draws from several of his previously published papers to compose the book's chapters and sections (10–11). This material is then organized into thirteen chapters, which are further divided into three parts. The first part deals with two problems: first, the duplication of narrative accounts of a single event, and second the historical disparity between the narratives of Exodus and Numbers, on the one hand, and Deuteronomy on the other. Berman responds to the first problem by observing that ancient Egyptian sources resort to literary duplication in the depiction of the battle of Kadesh (1274 BCE). He defends the existence of a different literary expectation behind the composition of the literary duplication found in the massive