

Book Reviews

God, Man and Salvation; A Biblical Theology, by W. P. Purkiser, Richard F. Taylor, and Willard H. Taylor. Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1977. 732 pp.

This volume on biblical theology is a timely one. The Old Testament section is divided into such matters as creation and the covenant, devotion and duty, and a prophetic vision. The New Testament section deals with God, man, Christ, salvation, the Christian life, “The Society of the Saved,” and the future. There is a subject index including Hebrew and Greek terms, an index of authors, a Scripture index, and a bibliography of 17 pages.

The authors are well-known in evangelical circles, all members of the Church of the Nazarene. Dr. Purkiser was the editor of *Herald of Holiness*, while the two Taylors have been for years on the faculty of the Nazarene Theological Seminary.

This volume is a major achievement. The authors make it clear that this is not systematic theology, (hence it is not in competition with H. Orton Wiley’s three-volume work on systematic theology). It is biblical theology in the sense that its major concern is to expound Bible doctrines, rather than to react against current issues in theological circles. The authors subscribe to the Wesleyan Arminian interpretation of Scriptures with a special focus on Christian perfection. Indeed, the reader is given an excellent insight into the biblical treatment of entire sanctification and the infilling of the Spirit.

The authors indicate an adequate awareness of contemporary biblical studies, and the more influential writers on the subject. In searching for a theme which unites the Scriptures, after considering others’ suggestions, such as the kingdom, or the covenant, or “Salvation History,” this trio finds the unifying element of the Scripture simply the theme of *salvation*. It is hard to find fault with this theme as fulfilling the central thrust of the Scriptures, especially as seen in the climactic statement of Revelation 21:3: God and redeemed man living together in atonement.

Some readers may wonder to what extent this is a biblical theology

in distinction from a systematic theology. Is it not rather a systematization of biblical doctrines? For example, they do not deal with doctrines of the Pentateuch as such, nor the doctrines of the wisdom books, or the doctrines of the historical books, or the prophetic books, or the apocalypses. In the New Testament they do not attempt to distinguish between the doctrines of the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John and the Epistles of Paul. While the emphasis on the unity of the Scriptures is to be welcomed, the question may be asked as to whether these authors too easily assume that each Bible writer writes from the same perspective and that one can easily be used to interpret another.

In general, however, the perspective of these writers is remarkably well balanced. For example in the Old Testament they recognize that the prophets who emphasize God's love are those who also stress the divine wrath. The authors also recognize that holiness must be seen against the background of sin, and vice versa. In the discussion of Old Testament theology, the doctrine of the holiness of God is presented very effectively and soundly.

Slightly more than three-fourths of the volume is concerned with the doctrines of the New Testament. Here the emphasis centers upon salvation through Christ. A strong case is made for entire sanctification as a second work of divine grace as distinct from regeneration. This is an important truth often overlooked in biblical theology. The presentation here is thorough and judicious. At times the case seems to be over-stated when the text is utilized without adequate concern for the context. For example, the seventh chapter of Romans is seen as the struggles of the Christian seeking cleansing from all sin. Paul would probably say that his main concern in this chapter was to show the difference between the God-fearing person under law (chapter seven) as distinct from one "in Christ" (chapter eight). Even under the old covenant the Hebrew believer could delight in the law of God in his inner heart, as many of the Psalms express, and still long for the complete freedom to follow the law completely. Wesley believed that chapter seven of Romans described the man outside of Christ. Its language is applicable, of course, to those who are "groaning for full redemption." Although the editors disclaim preoccupation with contemporary theological issues, they constantly indicate an awareness of many contemporary issues and argument is often designed to challenge them. In the treatment of the baptism of the Holy Spirit they are at pains to effectively articulate

the Wesleyan position, but their case may have been stronger if they had come to grips with some of the more recent effective treatments of those holding opposing views, such as the view that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” *always* indicates initiation.

In the difficult subject of eschatology effective integration of the varying data on this subject is presented. The authors present a moderate position, judicious in their use of materials and willing to leave some questions unanswered. The authors describe the difference in the pre-millennial, a-millennial and post-millennial views, and point out the difficulties in accepting any one view to the exclusion of the others; they leave the question unresolved.

The entire volume is characterized by mature and judicious scholarship. The bringing together of this mass of materials is in itself a herculean task. In the judgment of this reviewer they have succeeded in their purpose, and evangelical scholarship will stand in debt to them for years to come.

Reviewed by
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