

Book Reviews

Roy B. Zuck, ed., *Rightly Divided: Readings in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996, 320 pp., paper, \$14.99) reviewed by Charles E. McLain.

As indicated by the subtitle this volume is an anthology of articles collected by the editor on topics and issues of interest and importance within the field of hermeneutics. From living room and study, to small group and pulpit, to classroom and library carrel, hermeneutics is consciously or unconsciously foundational not only to formulating ones beliefs but also to putting those beliefs into practice. Whether realized or not, everyone approaches their Bible with a hermeneutical "plan." Unfortunately hermeneutical "plans" are most often implemented without foundational study and thoughtful consideration. We take our hermeneutical "plan" for granted with little, if any, preparation and fewer second thoughts.

Zuck's work is designed to enable the reader to survey representative works covering a spectrum of hermeneutical issues in concise, easily digestible chapters. Chapters 1-6 deal with introductory issues such as preunderstandings, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the author-text-reader dynamic, and more. Next he turns to issues involving language and meaning (chapters 7-13) such as semantics, figures of speech, ambiguity of language, context, the relation of purpose and meaning, and more. The third section is composed of four chapters dealing with OT quotes in the NT. The final section is composed of five chapters and deals with the area of cultural relevance and personal application.

The design of the book is to supplement and not to replace standard works on hermeneutics. Zuck has been successful in this design. The scope and sequence of the chapters coupled with their

readability make for an informative work. The 296 pages of text does not present a formidable challenge and may be easily covered in a couple of readings.

Rightly Divided provides the graduate who is five years or more removed from college or seminary the opportunity to “catch up” on the hermeneutical discussion in an easily digestible manner. It also provides non-graduates with a non-intimidating, informative opportunity to augment the foundation of their hermeneutical “plan.”

John W. Schmitt and J. Carl Laney, *Messiah's Coming Temple: Ezekiel's Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1997, 191 pp., paper, \$10.99) reviewed by Charles E. McLain.

John W. Schmitt serves as the Executive Director of Messianic Temple Ministries which he founded in 1986, and J. Carl Laney is a professor at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary. Schmitt and Laney approach this topic of eschatology from a basically conservative position. Their view of Scripture includes both an acknowledgment of its trustworthiness (pp. 77-78) and the practice of “literal (normal) interpretation” (pp. 81, 111). Their understanding of eschatology includes a view of the rapture as pre-tribulational and imminent (p. 68) and the Millennial kingdom as literal and 1,000 years in length (pp. 73-74, 132).

In attempting to place this narrow eschatological topic within the broader context of Scripture and history the authors assemble an informative survey of materials which actually goes well beyond the title topic of Ezekiel's temple. For example, they include a chapter providing a brief survey of biblical references to the Tabernacle and Temples (chapter 2: A Short History of Temples); a concise survey of Ezekiel's book (chapter 3: Ezekiel: The Prophet of Israel's Future Temple); a history of post-biblical

attempts to rebuild the Temple (chapter 4: Attempts at Rebuilding the Temple); surveys of end time events (chapter 5: What is Next on the Prophetic Calender?); and the “Life in the Messianic Age” (chapter 11). However, what their material possesses in breadth, it lacks in depth. Although the context they establish is of wide encompass, it remains a survey of materials.

Like many commentators who have approached the topic of the Tabernacle/Temple, Schmitt and Laney find typological significance in the various features of the biblical temples both past and future (pp. 26-32). They claim that “the tabernacle . . . is God's visual display of the person and work of Christ” (p. 25). While their typology is not as excessive as that of other commentators; one has to wonder whether they press their position too far. For example, in explaining the importance of the Temple on pages 36-37 they state:

The Temple was necessary because it served to illustrate God's plan for personal redemption during a time when few people had access to God's written revelation. The Temple took over the visual function of the tabernacle. It was a place where the people under the old covenant had the opportunity to develop their relationship with God through sacrifice and prayer.

It cannot be denied that the Tabernacle/Temple served as the place where believers under the old covenant worshiped God in obedience and truth. However, one has to wonder how many people outside of the priesthood had access to the Temple (or Tabernacle) to “visualize” the redemptive teaching symbols picturing “God's plan for personal redemption.” Only the priests had access to the Holy Place and only the High Priest had access to the Holy of Holies and then only once a year. Was the temple more accessible than the written word? Even if the answer is no, believers under the old covenant did not have to depend on the

written word alone to learn of God's redemptive plan. God's plan under the old covenant was for the priests to be dispersed among the people teaching God's word when they were not serving in the Temple/Tabernacle. Were those areas containing the majority of the significant teaching symbols such as the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies more accessible than the written word or the teaching ministry of the priests? How often did believers in the old covenant see the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, or the Ark of the Covenant? Perhaps their access was not as frequent or as visible as Schmitt and Laney seem to claim. Perhaps if there was significance to be benefited from the old covenant believers, it came from the oral teaching ministry of the priests and Levites. What could the value of "visual" teaching symbols be if they could not be seen?

The aim of the authors appears to be to present their materials for the popular audience. Much of the material is anecdotal in nature. Footnotes are kept to a bare minimum (less than three per chapter) and the bibliography for further reading contains only four references (p. 188). At a number of points this reviewer sought documentation that would have helped to support or to clarify their assertions but found it lacking. For example, the authors begin their study of the Tabernacle with a reference to Genesis 9:27, "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem." They claim that, "It is suggested by many ancient and modern commentators that the 'him' should be 'Him,' a direct reference to God" (p. 25). However, when one references their footnote (p. 33) only one source is cited: Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, pp. 80-82. Kaiser, who takes the same position as the authors, claims support from "the Targum of Onkelos, Philo, Maimonides, Rashi, Aben Ezra, Theodoret, Baumgarten, and Delitzsch" (p. 82). One wonders whether these eight references qualify as "many ancient and modern commentators"; particularly in light of the fact that five of the eight reflect a Jewish tradition in the passage. At the same

time, Schmitt and Laney present a number of pictures, models, and diagrams which help to clarify the materials being presented.

Robert Backhouse, *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to the Temple*, edited by Dr. Tim Dowley (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996, 32 pp., paper, \$7.99) reviewed by Charles E. McLain.

Backhouse provides a survey of the Tabernacle and Temple, past and future, with reference to related topics such as temple rituals, festivals, sacrifices, etc. As the book title advertises, Backhouse provides a "pictorial" survey of his topic. The book is filled with charts, diagrams, pictures of contemporary sites, of temple models, of artist's representations, etc. The book would provide a good tool for Sunday School teachers and a ready reference to introduce students to the scope of Tabernacle/Temple and related subjects.

Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997, 159 pp., paper, \$14.99) reviewed by Warren Vanhetloo.

The author introduces his book as "a call to scrutiny and evaluation," and considers it "an introduction to what we may expect to see in the years to come." He first presents a historical survey of postconservative evangelical theology and then evaluates recent trends in regard to the task and method of theology. He shows astonishing developments in three areas of doctrine: Scripture, God, and salvation. Many have conceived of evangelicalism as a single homogeneous monolithic movement. Erickson thoroughly documents significant changes, showing that recent new evangelicals (the new left) have a radically different

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agenda from their predecessors. He suggests also that many who have declared themselves in evangelical ranks do not meet the criteria characteristic of twentieth century evangelicalism. In his final chapter Erickson again raises the question of whether the evangelical left are almost or already liberals. He sees numerous trends toward liberal methods and positions and but few tendencies toward a more conservative evangelicalism. Surely all of us who consider ourselves fundamentalists should be aware of radical changes taking place in evangelical circles. We can rejoice to have been camped on solid doctrinal ground during recent decades rather than to have been swimming against the strong currents of moving evangelicalism. We must remember that our task is not to criticize departing brethren so much as it is to pray that we ourselves remain true to the truth and that we encourage fellow believers to do likewise. Paul wrote 195 verses instructing, admonishing, and encouraging Timothy; in only nine of those verses (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:17-18; 3:8-9; 4:10, 14-15) did he label those not true to the faith.

Peter Toon, *Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity* (Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint, 1996, 271 pp., \$17.99) reviewed by Warren Vanhetloo.

Although this study is from the perspective of the Episcopal Church (evident in characterization of the church, pp. 26-7, and in other ways), it has much information of current importance for all Christians. The book is well written and well documented. In four sections, the author deals with the theological distinction, the witness of the Old Testament, the witness of the New Testament, and contemporary expression. Among his conclusions, the author's insistence that the definite article should be employed in proper expression of the doctrine may not seem significant to many Americans (pp. 236-8); there hardly seems to be any distinction, let alone important doctrinal, liturgical, or didactic

difference, between "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" and "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Students, pastors, and mature Christians will all benefit from the truths considered throughout these pages.