

Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds. *Preaching Romans: Four Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 191 pages. \$14.63.

The editors of this book provide a sketch of four major interpretive perspectives on Paul's letter to the Romans. Each perspective is written by "a leading proponent of that approach" (xi). The traditional or Lutheran perspective is presented in chapter 1 by Stephen Westerholm. He maintains that this view contains the foundational truths that remain indisputably Pauline. These include: 1) all humans are sinful; 2) no human is righteous based on works; 3) through Christ God provides atonement for sins; 4) by grace God makes righteous those who have faith in Christ.

Scot McKnight represents the second interpretive school in chapter 2, the new perspective. Three "Rs" summarize the new perspective: reaction, renewal, and reformulation (22). Reaction refers to past Christian scholarship that viewed Judaism as a works righteousness religion. The new perspective returns to the roots of Judaism and redefines it not as a works-based religion but as a grace-based religion. This is followed by a renewed understanding of Judaism which maintains that God's grace saves but believers are called to obedience based on the law. Finally, Paul's theology is reformulated on the basis of the renewal. This reformulation ultimately leads to the new perspective which in a nutshell is "the unity of the church and the inclusion of all" (26). For Paul the problem is the relationship between the weak and the strong in Romans 12–16. The church, then, becomes God's agent of reconciliation in a divided world.

The third perspective is presented in chapter 3. Douglas Campbell describes the apocalyptic perspective which focuses on the issue of epistemology and asks the question, how do we know God? Here Campbell refutes foundationalism, which claims that we can know God through human history and culture. This leads to what he calls a "sacred nation theology" which in the past gave rise to National Socialism. In contrast, we know God through Christ. And how do we know Christ is the truth? Campbell says we must not look forward but *retrospectively* at the human predicament and the reason Jesus came. That is what Paul reveals to us in Romans 5–8. Jesus's death and resurrection is God's response to the human predicament. When we participate in Christ's death and resurrection our behavior is transformed and we come into relationship with God and others.

Michael Gorman, in chapter 4, presents the final perspective, the participationist perspective. He says, "To be in Christ is to *participate* in the life of the crucified but resurrected Lord" (59). The phrases "into," "in," and "with" Christ express a fundamental aspect of Pauline theology. It involves participating in Jesus's faithfulness. Gorman translates *pistis Christou* as "the faithfulness of Christ" (e.g. 3:26, 68). By "virtue of the incarnation and the work of the Spirit, we can become like Christ" (61). This is transformative participation. Gorman maintains that the participationist view is not competing with the apocalyptic or reformational perspectives but instead is "*complementing* them" (60).

The second half of the book contains twelve sermons, with each of the four perspectives represented by three sermons. Included are sermons by Fleming Rutledge, William Willimon, Scot McKnight, and Richard Hays. The sermons appear to be preached to specific audiences, even though those audiences are not usually identified.

One of the difficulties with the sermons is that it is not always easy to identify how they align with the particular perspective they represent. To include a prefatory note with each sermon to highlight its unique features would help readers. The editors do acknowledge that there are

overlapping ideas between the four perspectives. They emphasize that no one of them is the right way. Rather they act “as an interpretive kaleidoscope” (169). Thus, the sermons naturally interact with more than one perspective. Another way of helping to distinguish the sermons would have been to place the three representative sermons immediately following the interpretive perspective rather than putting all twelve of them in the second half of the book.

This book is written for preachers and is intended to help them navigate the interpretive and often murky waters surrounding the book of Romans. The four perspectives provide succinct descriptions that introduce preachers to the basic tenets of each one and how to move forward in preaching Romans. The sermons are insightful, creative, and stimulate further ideas for preaching the message of Romans. I highly recommend this book to preachers as well as homileticians who teach classes that deal with preaching biblical texts.

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