

painting, this reviewer is convinced we must be prepared to plunge into the black, icy waters.

doi:10.1017/S0036930620000113

## William M. Wright and Francis Martin, *Encountering the Living God in Scripture: Theological and Philosophical Principles for Interpretation*

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), pp. xviii + 253. \$26.99.

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*Encountering the Living God in Scripture* is an engaging contribution to the theory and practice of the interpretation of scripture. Wright and the late Martin divide their book into two parts, *Fides* and *Quaerens Intellectum*.

The first part (*Fides*) examines several biblical examples from both the New and Old Testaments, which in one way or another concern the Word of God. Chapter 1 focuses on 'Word of God' as direct divine speech, and it is claimed that this evokes notions of causal power and the slightly vague notion of 'presence'. The two are linked, such that the word of God, which Jesus speaks, causally creates the presence of the kingdom. Chapters 2 and 3 turn to inspired human speech, namely that of 'the Prophets' (chapter 2) and 'the Apostles' (chapter 3). Their case is that the same two aspects of the word of God established in chapter 1 'carry into the Word spoken by the prophets' (p. 37). Examples from narratives (the Deuteronomic history, Elijah and Elisha), and the prophets (Jeremiah, Second Isaiah) are laid out to demonstrate that causal power and presence are given through human speech. In the lengthier third chapter they examine Acts and the themes of 'teaching the Word of God' and 'proclaiming the Word in the power of the Spirit'. Again, this is taken to show that such human speech mediates divine presence and power. Various passages in the letters are marshalled to further develop this case (1 Cor 1:18–2:5; 1 Thess 2:13; Rom 1:16; 1 Pet 1:10–12, 23; 2:1–3). Chapter 4, which brings the first part to an end, considers the word of God as given in inspired writing. The authors restrict themselves to examining just two biblical complexes, namely Hebrews 4:12 and various passages in the Gospel of John, which again leads them to bring together the themes of power and presence.

In the book's second part (*Quaerens Intellectum*) more technical theological and philosophical meditations are brought to bear on scripture. This section is a progressive argument. Chapter 5 sets out the doctrine of creation, which is taken to provide the frame for all theological topics. Chapter 6 draws on Aquinas to deepen these reflections on creation by establishing metaphysical grounding for the Creator–creation distinction. Chapter 7 applies these claims, with focus on the theme of transcendence, to the question of how one understands scripture. This allows Wright and Martin in chapter 8 to specify how mind (human knowledge), words and world relate in a way which resists trends in modern philosophy (namely, Kantianism). R. Sokolowski (who also

wrote the book's foreword) plays a key role in these discussions. Chapter 9 applies the arguments developed in these chapters to scripture itself by focusing on the topic of mediation, while chapter 10 relates these concerns to the human reception or assimilation of divine realities mediated by scripture. The language of 'disposition' can be traced through much of this final chapter, establishing the import of moral and spiritual disposition for reading the Bible.

Much of the philosophical discussion was helpfully brought into dialogue with the book's theme. For example, the discussion relating to W. Norris Clarke's 'relational realism' sets about unpicking philosophical commitments which skew approaches to scripture. The chapters are also very clearly organised, making their argument transparent. Greater theological facility would have been ideal. For example, in the first part of the book, a little more discussion on the relationship between Jesus – as *the* Word – and the words of scripture would have been helpful (cf. Barth's account of the threefold form of the Word of God in the *Church Dogmatics* I/1). In the second part, more serious questions may be raised about the order of theological reflection. Why begin with creation as the frame for all other theological topics? Why not rather begin with christology, given that 'all things have been created through him and for him' (Col 1:16)? To what extent this may or may not adjust their conclusions can be debated, but it may, at least, relocate or reframe their arguments pertaining to human disposition. This rich and learned volume nevertheless provides numerous helpful correctives and insights and deserves careful study.

doi:10.1017/S0036930620000095