

This is not to suggest that the assumed unitary authorship of Luke and Acts is unassailable, but I cannot see that Walters' methodology and conclusions have seriously challenged the traditional assumption.

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Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 409. \$30.00.

Anthony Thiselton is a New Testament scholar rightly celebrated for his influential publications on biblical hermeneutics. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* is not a major new work, but it is a significant contribution which supplements Thiselton's substantial corpus.

The first quarter of *Hermeneutics* provides a good review of major currents in biblical hermeneutics (though not in philosophical hermeneutics). Thiselton's use of many concrete biblical examples to illustrate modern hermeneutical debate and practice should prove especially useful for the beginner. The last quarter of *Hermeneutics* will also be very useful in introductory courses, and may be the most important contribution of this volume, for Thiselton provides concise reports on a multitude of influential works in liberation theology, postcolonial theory, feminism, womanism, reader-response and reception theory, all of which owe a decisive debt to major developments in twentieth-century hermeneutics. Aside from attenuated and mostly negative summaries of Foucault, Derrida and Rorty, Thiselton's analyses are pithy and fair.

In the third quarter of the book, only the chapter on mid-twentieth-century approaches (Barth, the New Hermeneutic, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Barr's Semantics) is suitable for introductory use. The chapters on Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Bultmann, Gadamer and Ricoeur are both too advanced to be useful for the beginning student and insufficiently developed fully to engage scholars. They are best read as supplements to Thiselton's earlier work, and in that sense they are indeed a new and valuable resource (Thiselton himself repeatedly refers readers to his previous publications).

I would argue that the second quarter of the book, which addresses hermeneutics from the third to the eighteenth centuries, suffers from a complicated problem. As Gadamer realised with signal clarity, after Heidegger it becomes apparent that Schleiermachean hermeneutics begins with authors, texts and interpreters as uninterrogated givens. Heidegger

awakened us to the stunning phenomena of textuality as such, which depends upon and marks the emergence into existence of understanding, and of beings that understand. After Heidegger, hermeneutics names ontological exploration into the phenomenon of understanding and displaces epistemology as first philosophy. Exploration into the dynamics of the interpretation of written texts remains a significant aspect of hermeneutics. Now, however, it is but a part of a larger exploration into more fundamental questions of understanding, meaning, meaningfulness, authority and truth.

Thiselton's definition of hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics, however, remains Schleiermachean: 'hermeneutics explores how we read, understand, and handle texts, especially those written in another time', and, 'Biblical hermeneutics investigates more specifically how we read . . . biblical texts' (p. 1). As a consequence, Thiselton's study of hermeneutics from the third to the eighteenth centuries is focused overwhelmingly upon theological figures' biblical exegesis, and they are evaluated using the essentially Schleiermachean canons of biblical interpretation predominant in twentieth-century biblical studies. This creates the misleading impression that hermeneutics is still an essentially epistemological enterprise concerned primarily with the interpretation of texts, and that biblical interpretation is and always has been 'first theology'.

For example, Thiselton poses the question of hermeneutics *vis-à-vis* Thomas almost wholly in terms of Thomas' exegesis of scripture, and evaluates Thomas using the neo-Schleiermachean standards of twentieth-century biblical studies. This misrepresents both the role of scripture in Thomas and the contours of the history of reception of his work. In particular, the significance of the highly complex and historically pivotal character of Thomas' appeal not only to scripture, but also to tradition, reason and Aristotle is marginalised.

In sum, on the whole *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* is a fine work. The first and fourth quarters of *Hermeneutics*, covering biblical hermeneutics and the most significant late twentieth-century movements in theological and philosophical hermeneutics, should be very useful to the introductory reader and for introductory courses in hermeneutics. The second quarter's treatment of hermeneutics in the third to the eighteenth centuries is unduly circumscribed but helps open up a largely neglected area of inquiry. And the third quarter of the work provides an important supplement to Thiselton's other writings in hermeneutics.

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