

for 'the core of the Christian language of faith' and its 'concept of God' (p. 33; cf. pp. 90, 164, 210, 227), Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4 are registered only four times in the index and are never subjected to exegesis. The 'second table' of the Lord's Prayer – petitions for bread, forgiveness and deliverance from evil – is virtually ignored, even though all tally with the author's reflections on God's gifts of life, love, justice and repulsion of evil. The core of Muis' proffered concept is actually 1 John 4:8b, 'God is love', from which all other divine attributes fan out and are coordinated. This set of exegetical decisions sometimes carries the author into awkward positions, when the Bible's 'multi-form' speech (p. 24) does not obviously conform with his conceptual core. The most glaring example is found in 1 Samuel 15: 'texts in which God commands the extermination of entire peoples never have the same weight as the texts on God's love' (p. 234), 'in which there is no place for coercion or violence' (p. 297). A subtler specimen is Exodus 3:14, where Muis identifies YHWH as 'the triune God' (p. 141) who may be predicated as Father, King and Creator, and thus the source of 'basic biblical statements and grammatical rules of Christian talk about God' (p. 157). Such may or may not be accepted by Christians as the implicit theology of the call of Moses. It is odd that Muis does not correlate divine holiness, 'God as the Most High [who] is always already and perfectly himself' (p. 202), with YHWH, the One whose name Jesus taught his disciples to hallow.

If the complexity of biblical speech about God resists systematic reconciliation, we have Professor Muis, not to fault, but rather to thank for courageously engaging the witnesses of both testaments, their traditional extrapolations and their impact on Christian experience. Classical church dogmatics seems an endangered species. That which grapples with the church's scripture is even rarer. (Biblical exegetes who dare travel in the opposite direction are all but nonexistent.) Concentrating on the most recondite of subjects, the Christian doctrine of God, Muis has harvested the mature fruit of a lifetime's rumination on theology past and present, philosophical hermeneutics and biblical interpretation. From many he has learned; by none is he intimidated. Among this book's most refreshing features is its humility: self-critically framing sound questions, weighing alternatives and searching for the best answers, which are always provisional. 'Our conception of God's attributes always lags behind the full and simple reality of God. It is no more than an approach to God. God himself is always greater' (p. 161).

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Brendan Byrne, Paul and the Economy of Salvation: Reading from the Perspective of the Last Judgment

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In recent Pauline scholarship several studies have been offered addressing Paul's remarks about the final judgement. Various strands of scholarship have been troubled

by Paul's remarks that the final judgement is according to works, given the way in which justification is understood. Others have argued that there is little to no connection between (initial) justification and the final judgement. In the present volume, Byrne, known especially for his previous work on sonship in Paul and a commentary on Romans in the *Sacra Pagina* series, traces Paul's remarks about the final judgement across the major letters before offering a synthesis of Paul's view of the salvation process. Byrne's main thesis is captured in this statement: 'There is then, as I will argue, an intrinsic and indeed causal connection between the way believers live in the present time and their secure passage through the last judgement to the full blessings of salvation' (p. 3).

Byrne's study begins with the claim that Paul must be read in the context of ancient Jewish apocalyptic. Jewish apocalyptic offers an eschatological perspective in which a last judgement according to one's works has a crucial role. To establish this claim Byrne surveys a wide swath of Jewish texts. These texts are not always strictly apocalypses, but do in some way connect to what scholars refer to with the term 'apocalyptic'. Byrne emphasises the eschatological elements of the texts and particularly the role ascribed to the last judgement. Salvation, he contends, depends on a favourable outcome at the last judgement, and this is attained through one's works.

After a brief discussion of 'righteousness' language in Paul's letters, Byrne next investigates Paul's remarks about the final judgement. One chapter is devoted to the major Pauline letters apart from Romans. For the analysis of Romans, which amounts to over a third of the book, Byrne discusses each section of the letter individually, with particular attention given to Romans 5–8. Paul's conception is complicated by his eschatological scheme in which time is split between a now and not yet, and believers find themselves living in the overlap between the ages. Byrne argues that, like the Jewish apocalyptic texts, Paul holds that 'the gaining of salvation depends on being found righteous at the judgment' (p. 69).

After tracing Paul's remarks about the last judgement, the next chapters offer a synthetic description of Paul's understanding of salvation by tracing the human problem, God's redemptive act and the future resurrection. The volume concludes with some theological reflections, which function in part as a summary of the key ideas advanced in the previous chapters. Readers may find it helpful to begin with this chapter before reading the exegetical analysis of the Pauline letters since it is here that the most important claims are succinctly stated.

Byrne's study reviews a large number of texts and deals with a variety of important theological issues, as one would expect from a study on the final judgement in Paul's thought. What draws these various elements together is Byrne's insistence that Paul thought the world was headed toward a final judgement according to works. At the core of this study, then, is the claim that how one lives in the present matters at the judgement. As noted, Byrne contends that human obedience has a significant place in the salvation process. He thus places a heavy emphasis on human agency. Yet, unlike other studies, such as that of C. VanLandingham (*Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul*), Byrne contends that the Spirit is active in human obedience. In fact, he stresses that 'the capacity that believers have to live out the righteousness required at the judgment stems entirely from their life in Christ and is the product of the Spirit within them' (p. 70). In view of this connection, the judgement 'will focus on how they have maintained and lived out their existence in Christ' (p. 241). 'Any merits', he concludes, are 'the merits of Christ' (p. 242). With this conclusion, Byrne seems to be trying to walk a tight line between Paul's emphasis

on union with Christ and human action. What seems to be missing at this point is any clear explanation of how this works and what it means for the judgement. Is the criterion of judgement the believer's own works or those of Christ? And if it is, in fact, the believer's personal works, in what sense can the believer have any confidence that the works will be found sufficient?

Such questions should not distract from the merits of Byrne's study. Regardless of whether readers find his conclusions convincing, his analysis certainly draws us back to the wonder and complexity of Paul's letters, and encourages believers to more faithful obedience. Readers will find much to value and discuss.

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Joel Banman, *Reading in the Presence of Christ: A Study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Bibliology and Exegesis*

(London: T&T Clark, 2020), pp. xi + 228. £85.00

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It is difficult to imagine many theologians of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's milieu writing with the sort of childlike fondness for the Bible which he occasionally exhibits. In a letter from 1936, for example, he writes, 'I believe that the Bible alone is the answer to all our questions', and that scripture 'becomes more miraculous to me each day'. This was, after all, the Berlin milieu of people like Adolf von Harnack, for whom Barth's *Letter to the Romans* was famously derided as reading the Bible in a way more appropriate for confirmation classes than theological analysis.

The situation is all the more surprising given the sheer complexity and technical sophistication of Bonhoeffer's early theological work, published as *Sanctorum Communio* (1930) and *Act and Being* (1931). Perhaps a perceived disjuncture between the author of two high-flying dissertations and the letter writer with such an (allegedly) naïve biblical piety led some early commentators to downplay the importance of Bonhoeffer's relationship with the Bible more generally, or at least to separate the overtly 'theological' from the 'devotional' or 'homiletic' works like *Discipleship* (1936) and *Life Together* (1940). This not only does a disservice to a relatively consistent biblical grounding for the theology, however, it also misrepresents the complexity of those faith-filled texts which have been dismissed as 'mere sermons'.

The impulses behind these mischaracterisations are thankfully much less prevalent on the theological scene today, not least because what might be termed the 'theological interpretation of Scripture' is an established sphere of inquiry alongside or within systematic theology. The manifold limits of historical criticism are also more widely accepted, of course, and faithful readings of the Bible are no longer assumed by definition to forfeit intellectual integrity by way of devotional fervour. Against this background, Joel Banham's *Reading in the Presence of Christ* is both welcome and timely.