

*New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel.* I. Howard Marshall. Leicester: Apollos, 2004, 752 pp., hb., £24.99.

The appearance of a major New Testament Theology is always a welcome event, all the more when the author has a proven track record of publication in the field. Marshall's work is based on the conviction that New Testament theology is essential missionary theology (following David Wenham) and that a synthetic New Testament theology is a real possibility. As the subtitle indicates, there are "many witnesses" to "one gospel." After a preface, which provides an introductory discussion on the topic, "How Do We Do New Testament Theology?," Marshall first treats the Synoptic Gospels and Acts (in the order Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts), then each of Paul's letters (in presumed chronological rather than canonical order). Next, he turns to the Johannine literature (the Gospel, letters, and Revelation) and finally discusses Hebrews and the epistles of James, Peter, and Jude.

In his treatment, Marshall seeks to strike a balance between a presentation of the individual, distinct voices of the New Testament and a demonstration of the overarching synthesis of the New Testament message. This is accomplished very effectively by summary discussions at the end of each of the major units (Synoptic Gospels and Acts; Pauline epistles; etc.) with titles such as "The Theology of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts"; "Paul, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts"; "John, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, and Paul," and so on. A final essay treats diversity and unity in the New Testament. Marshall's form of presentation makes the book useful both as a New Testament Theology and as a book-by-book Introduction to the New Testament.

The brief space available makes it impossible to interact fully with Marshall's work. A few selected comments must suffice. On the back cover, Marshall's volume is hailed as "a stunning achievement" and "today's standard in the field" by this "dean of evangelical New Testament scholars." Are these epithets fitting or typical advance praise solicited by publishers? First, while "stunning achievement" may be at least slightly hyperbolic, Marshall's NT Theology does, in the judgment of this reviewer, live up to the billing of setting a new standard for this kind of work. Similar to James Dunn's magisterial volume on Pauline theology, Marshall provides an eminently defensible, lucid, and well-executed discussion of the theology of the NT and its various writers. Clearly, this work represents a crowning achievement of a long and distinguished career.

Second, those who favor a more canonical approach, as well as those who do not hold to Markan priority, will demur from Marshall's choice of starting with Mark and of following a chronological rather than canonical mode of presentation. Nevertheless, Marshall makes a strong case for his chosen procedure in the introduction, and admittedly no chosen format is free from potential difficulty.

Third, the synthetic treatment of individual NT books provided by Marshall will, in my view, prove exceedingly helpful for students and teachers alike and make this a preferred textbook in courses on the subject, at least until the arrival of other NT theologies currently in preparation. To use the chapter on Mark as an example, Marshall first provides a deft and meaty summary of what he calls "Mark's Theological Story," for the most part proceeding chronologically (but not slavishly so). After this, he discusses various Markan "Theological Themes": the kingdom of God; the person and mighty works of Jesus; the future of the kingdom and the Messiah; and people's response to Jesus. The chapter concludes with a summary of Mark's theological contribution to the NT canon.

While there are doubtless individual points of interpretation on which readers will disagree with Marshall, his overall synthesis of NT theology as missionary and as diverse yet unified is compelling indeed. Those who are familiar with Marshall's writings will find this volume vintage Marshall. As one who will be teaching courses on NT theology on both the masters and the doctoral level I certainly welcome the arrival of this eminently useful text.

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