

Romans: The Righteousness of God. By Adolf Schlatter. Translated by Siegfried S. Schatzmann. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995, xxiv + 287 pp., n. p.*

On the vanguard of a Schlatter renaissance in America that is slowly gaining momentum, this is only the second book-length translation of one of this Swiss-German author's works. Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938), who spent most of his scholarly career at Tübingen, published his commentary on Romans in 1935 at the age of eighty-three. As an independent, he was attacked by liberals and fundamentalist-leaning pietists alike. Schlatter wrote outside the German Lutheran tradition, contending that Reformation categories were insufficient for an adequate understanding of Paul's theology. In particular, he replaced the Reformers' anthropocentric point of departure with a theocentric understanding that focused on the revelation of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ. Likewise, the Lutheran dichotomy between the law and the gospel was rejected by Schlatter as an inaccurate reading of Paul's thought. The English translation of this work comes with a foreword by the Tübingen professor P. Stuhlmacher, who provides a helpful (and largely positive) assessment of Schlatter's interpretation of Paul. Generally, Stuhlmacher is doubtless correct when he judges Schlatter's primary contribution to lie in his overall perspective rather than in exegetical details.

In many ways, it is deplorable that sixty years had to pass before Schlatter's commentary was made available to an English-speaking audience. How much better if it had been translated prior to the recent explosion in Pauline scholarship, in time to be integrated into the work of more recent interpreters. It remains to be seen how many will care to pause and ponder Schlatter's insights in the midst of the frantic pace of contemporary scholarly endeavor. Nevertheless, the publication of this work on Romans is a cause for measured gratitude, "measured" in part owing to the less-than-fully-adequate translation. Generally, the translator's clinging to German word order and diction wherever possible makes for a multitude of curious English renderings that frequently can be unraveled only by recourse to the German original. Of greater consequence is Schatzmann's purging Schlatter's writing of all noninclusive gender language. This has the effect of overturning authorial intent, which surely exceeds the proper role of the translator. For instance, on p. 8 Schatzmann translates the German "dass er Männer [men] zu Propheten machte" by "through *those* whom he made prophets." The translator's revisionism even extends to Scripture itself. On p. 126, Rom 5:12 is rendered as follows; "As sin came into the world through one *individual* and death through sin, so death came to all *humans* . . ." As a result, Paul's analogy between the *man* Jesus Christ and all *men* is completely lost (I am indebted for this example to E. Earle Ellis, who shared it in a personal correspondence with Robert W. Yarbrough). It is necessary to reject this subtle yet transparent agenda as an attempt to domesticate Schlatter, which also results in misleading readers whose only access to Schlatter's thought is through Schatzmann's translation. Moreover, one misses a preface by the translator dealing with questions such as: Which philosophy of translation was used? Why was Schlatter's work on Romans singled out for publication rather than any other of Schlatter's writings? How can the release of this work still be justified, when research on Romans has virtually revolutionized contemporary thought on Paul? Answers to these questions can doubtless be given, but the reader is left completely in the dark regarding these.

On the positive side, it must be admitted that translating Schlatter is a challenging task, and Schatzmann should be commended for his willingness to tackle this project. Reference has already been made to the nascent Schlatter renaissance in the English-speaking world, of which this publication is a part. Robert Yarbrough's recent translation of Werner Neuer's popular biography provides American readers with a helpful introduction to Schlatter's life and thought, and the present reviewer is preparing an English translation of Schlatter's two-volume *New Testament Theology*, arguably one of Schlatter's major works. All those engaged in the project of making Schlatter's work available to a contemporary English-speaking audience are united in the conviction that those readers stand to benefit significantly from an exposure to Schlatter's thought. As a result, God's Word will be more accurately understood and Jesus and Paul liberated from current domestication.

And Scripture, in the present case the book of Romans, will once again change the lives of individuals as it did in the cases of Augustine, Luther and Barth.

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