

Book Review

Hamilton, J. M (2014). *What Is Biblical Theology?* Wheaton: Crossway.127 pages. ISBN 978-1-4335-3771-4. Price US\$ 12.

The book examines the teaching of the Bible from three perspectives: the Bible's big story, its symbolic universe and its love story. The initial step in the discussion is to provide a rounded understanding of biblical theology. Hamilton's basic premise is that biblical theology is an examination of 'the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors/ (p. 15). Whatever the material type, this approach is adhered to consistently in the book. Hamilton's stated aim is that readers will not only adopt the perspective of the biblical authors but 'will read the world from the Bible's perspective' rather than the other way around (p. 23).

To accomplish this goal, Hamilton traces the story of the Bible in terms of setting, characters and plot. He explores the fourfold plot of the Bible story and discusses the mystery behind the plot. In the second segment of the book, Hamilton discusses the symbols used by biblical authors, what these symbols stand for and how they are utilised to interpret or summarise prior data (see p. 65). The symbols are organised into three types, imagery, typology and patterns. The final segment of the book tells the story of the Bible, namely, the story about Christ and his people through the marriage symbolism. The book delves into the identity and setting of the story and relates the resolution of the plot's tension. Hamilton concludes his presentation with an appeal that 'biblical theology is an attempt to get out of this world into another,' that is the Bible's (p. 115).

I find Hamilton's approach highly refreshing and providing a better handle for those who seek to teach biblical theology. The ability to compact such complex thoughts in so succinct a manner is highly commendable. The book is an excellent textbook for an introductory course in biblical theology. I believe that Hamilton has accomplished the major goals he set out for the book.

What Is Biblical Theology? is a rather concise but provocative approach to the subject of biblical theology. Over the years, there have been many different approaches to this subject. Hamilton's approach is unique in its simplicity and yet thorough in its examination. To the best of my knowledge, his approach to biblical theology is new and refreshing.

I did however, wish there was more discussion about the various symbols introduced, not so much because of some missing ideas but more due to the intrigue created by Hamilton's presentation. I certainly wished for more materials concerning the images of the church, of which only a few pertinent ones were discussed. However, this seems to belabour the point; the book is an excellent tool and worth more than its asking price.

I highly recommend this book to every Christian reader. Its brevity disguises its weightiness and I strongly suggest the book for those truly interested in the primary message of the Bible. I also recommend the book as a truly useful tool for anyone who teaches the Bible.

About the Reviewer

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