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Book Review: Ephesians

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earth and its fullness are the Lord's," Ps 24:1; 1 Cor 10:26), and pointed to Moses' education in the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:21–22).

Part 3 ("Looking Back to the New Testament") asks if the Homeric challenge regarding encyclical education is present within the NT texts. Sandnes notes that the issue "never came explicitly to the surface" (p. 275). Given that the rhetorical function of his letters articulates and affirms a new Christian identity for his converts, one should not be surprised that Paul's letters do not provide much evidence for a favorable stance toward participating in encyclical education. Paul does, however, on a few occasions quote pagan authors, and he urges the Philippians to distinguish between what is good and bad (Phil 4:8–9). By and large, however, "Paul fundamentally opposed a logic implying that Christian faith was the culmination of liberal studies and Greek philosophy in particular" (p. 276).

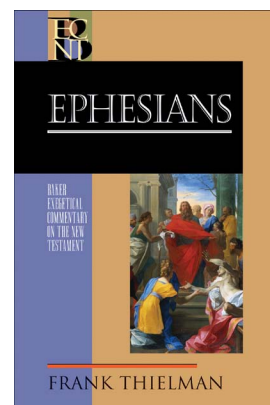
The Challenge of Homer makes an excellent contribution for the student of early Christianity on at least three counts. First, it provides a readable account of ancient education in antiquity. It introduces the role of teachers, how students learned to read and write, the core curriculum, whether girls were allowed to participate in encyclical studies, the relationship between education and the instillation of *paideia*, and many more issues. Second, it gives special attention to the importance of the Homeric epics in the student's education as well as the strategies employed to interpret Homer. Third, the greatest contribution of the book is the attention to the early Christian sources and their response to the Homeric challenge. While the book is necessarily repetitive (many of the responses and strategies are similar), Sandnes has provided the reader with a handy source-book and commentary on how the early Christians responded to the Homeric challenge.

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Frank Thielman. *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. xxii + 520 pp. \$44.99.

As the author of the commentary on Ephesians in the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), this is Frank Thielman's second commentary on this NT letter. Thielman is a world-renowned expert in Pauline studies. He has also written a major volume on NT Theology. The BECNT series is one of the more helpful commentary series on the NT, and this volume is a welcome addition.

Thielman's introduction to this volume covers the standard critical questions and is helpful at numerous points. Thielman enthusiastically endorses the Pauline authorship of Ephesians, and his critique of the argument that this is a pseudonymous letter is particularly insightful. His discussion of the letter's purpose is especially detailed (pp. 19–28). Thielman suggests that Ephesians was written towards the end of Paul's imprisonment in Rome and was aimed at addressing a number of concerns within the Ephesian church. More specifically, Thielman suggests the church in Ephesus was plagued by disunity among Jewish and Gentile believers, challenges from the Imperial and Artemis cults, and was reabsorbing the pagan ideals they had left behind at conversion. Thielman argues that



Paul addresses these challenges facing the Ephesian church by reminding them of God's power and grace, God's plan to unite the cosmos, and their appropriate response to these theological truths. There is much to appreciate about Thielman's approach to this issue, though more work needs to be done in this area.

The format of this commentary follows that of others within this series. One of the strengths of this series is the attempt to demonstrate how each individual passage fits within the letter's overall rhetorical strategy. There is a sustained attempt throughout commentaries in this series to help the reader understand how each passage develops the author's argument and is related to what has come before and what follows. This series thus offers a valuable top-down *and* bottom-up analysis that guides the reader in not only appreciating the finer points of exegesis but also the "big-picture" of each NT text. Each major section of Ephesians is briefly discussed and placed within the context of the letter. Each passage within that section is then briefly introduced, followed by the author's translation of the Greek text and verse-by-verse exposition, a summary of the passage, and a final section addressing more technical concerns.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this commentary is its discussion of the use of the OT in the letter to the Ephesians. This is no doubt the result of Thielman's work in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Thielman, for example, observes the presence of exodus/new exodus imagery (e.g., ἀπολύτρωσιν in Eph 1:7) in Eph 1:7–10 (pp. 56, 59–60). Thielman also rightly suggests the phrase τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ("the covenants of promise") in 2:12 refers primarily to the Abrahamic covenant and the new covenant (pp. 154–56). The salvation-historical movement that underlies 2:11–22 and the statement regarding the abrogation of the Mosaic law in 2:14–15 makes this the most viable reading of this particular phrase in v. 12 (cf. Rom 7:1–6; 2 Cor 3:1–18; Gal 3:6–18; 4:23–24). Thielman also fittingly concludes that the allusion to Isa 28:16 in Eph 2:20 (ἀκρογωνιαίου) suggests the temple described in 2:19–21 is to be associated with the eschatological temple populated by Jew and Gentile pictured in such texts as Isa 2:1–2; 66:19–23; Tob. 14:5–7; *1 En.* 90:29–34 (p. 184). I would question his conclusion that 2:19–22 depicts the "final fulfillment of Jewish eschatological expectations" because it would be more appropriate to describe the "new heavens and new earth" of Rev 21:1–22:7 as the ultimate fulfillment of these prophetic expectations and the temple of Eph 2:19–22 as an inaugural fulfillment. But his reading of this text deserves to be taken seriously in light of the presence of new creation imagery throughout this passage (cf. 2:1–3, 10, 15) and the presence of allusions to Isa 52:7; 57:19 in Eph 2:13, 17.

With the publication of this commentary, evangelicals concerned with understanding the letter to the Ephesians now have a number of excellent commentaries to choose from. For the graduate student or scholar seeking help with a detailed exegetical issue, this commentary (along with that of Hoehner, Best, and Lincoln) is certainly worth consulting and well deserves space on a bookshelf. Some pastor-teachers looking for guidance in preparing a sermon would also benefit from this commentary. However, in my opinion, the recent commentary by Clint Arnold (*Ephesians* [ZECNT 10; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010]) is more suited to the needs of those engaged in sermon preparation and would be well paired with Peter T. O'Brien's volume on Ephesians in the Pillar NT Commentary series. Despite the relative brevity of Ephesians, it would likely take many years (and many more pages) for any scholar to produce a commentary capable of adequately meeting the needs of every possible reader on so theologically dense a letter as Ephesians. Nonetheless, if there is a drawback to this commentary worth highlighting it is

that its discussion of the contemporary appropriation of this letter's message is unfortunately limited. Despite this weakness, I would strongly recommend this commentary.

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Alan J. Thompson. *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 27. Downers Grove: IVP, 2011. 231 pp. \$24.00.

Alan Thompson's book on the theology of Acts is part of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series edited by Don Carson. It is a worthy addition to the series, representing biblical theology at its best. Thompson does not attempt to write an exhaustive study of the theology of Acts but focuses on themes that accord with Luke's own interests, writing in a lucid and engaging manner. Hence, this would be an ideal volume for any study on Acts or for a course on biblical theology.

According to Thompson, the book of Acts unfolds the fulfillment of God's saving purposes. Specifically, the sovereignty and kingdom of God take center stage in Acts. Thompson maintains that Acts is a book about the risen Christ, who exercises his reign at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is returning to complete God's sovereign purposes, but in the interval between the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom, he rules from heaven. The church faces suffering in the interval between the already and not-yet, but the word of the gospel continues to spread despite and even through such suffering. Thompson provides his own outline of Acts, modifying the idea that the summary statements of Acts (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20) function as the major dividing points. He particularly questions finding a major dividing point in 6:7. But against Thompson, the Stephen speech is placed after the spread of the gospel in Jerusalem since it functions as the catalyst, even though it takes place in Jerusalem, for the progress of the gospel outside Jerusalem (8:4).

Acts emphasizes particularly the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thompson rightly locates Ezek 37 as a key OT text for the hope of the resurrection. Israel is promised that she will return from exile, be cleansed from sin, receive the Spirit, be united as a nation, strengthened to keep God's commands, and live under the reign of a new David. Similar prophecies in some respects are found in Isa 26 and Dan 12. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, which Luke features as a historical reality, signifies the fulfillment of Israel's hope. The promises of the age to come have been realized in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus pours out the Spirit because he is risen and exalted (Acts 2:33). As the resurrected one he grants forgiveness and repentance to Israel (Acts 5:30–31). Thompson rightly argues that Luke has a theology of atonement against those who think that atonement is diminished in Luke and Acts. Still, the resurrection takes center stage, for it certifies the efficacy of Jesus' death and the fulfillment of God's promises.

Thompson argues that Jesus answers the disciples' question in Acts 1:6. The gift of the Spirit both in Acts and the OT is closely connected to the coming of the kingdom, and hence the reference to the Spirit doesn't veer off onto another topic. That Jesus answered the query of the disciples is also supported by

