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Book Reviews

Various Authors

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Book Reviews

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ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ: The Letters of Ignatius. Edited by Shawn J. Wilhite and Brian Renshaw. Volume 1 of *Apostolic Fathers Greek Reader*. Series edited by T. Michael W. Halcomb and Fredrick J. Long. Wilmore, KY: Glossa House, 2015, 81 pp., \$10.99.

The seven authentic letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (ca. 110 CE), provide some of the earliest insight into the theology, organization and worship, internecine struggles, and epistolary practices of the primitive Church outside of the New Testament. *ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ: The Letters of Ignatius* is a unique tool that assists those with an intermediate level of Koine Greek in reading these valuable epistles. Using the text of Kirsopp Lake's 1919 edition of *The Apostolic Fathers*, *ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ* provides definitions and parsing information in footnotes in the bottom margins of the page for every word in the text that occurs 30 times or less in the Greek New Testament.

ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ is the first volume in the newly launched *Apostolic Fathers Greek Reader Series (AFGR)* published by Glossa House in Wilmore Kentucky. Glossa House is a newly minted publishing company founded by T. Michael W. Halcomb and Fredrick J. Long in 2012 with the goal of creating and publishing "innovative language resources to help students and researchers advance in their acquisition of languages, especially biblical languages" (www.glossahouse.com). The *AFGR* is itself a subset of a broader series, *AGROS*, an acronym for *Accessible Greek Resources and Online Studies* (p. ix). The *AGROS* series is composed of Greek readers, grammars, exegetical guides, and other tools (p. ix). These resources are graded by their difficulty into five tiers: tier 1 (beginning I), tier 2 (beginning II), tier 3 (intermediate I), tier 4 (intermediate II), and tier 5 (advanced) (p. ix). The tier level of each resource is indicated by a number placed on the cover. *ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ* has been graded as an intermediate level Greek text and is placed in tier 4 of the *AGROS* series.

The editors used the *Accordance Bible Software* tool to locate and limit the vocabulary included in the footnotes to those words that occur 30 times or less in the Greek New Testament (p. xiii). The word definitions used in these footnotes are compiled from *BDAG*, *LSJ*, and Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. These footnotes give the following information. For nouns: nominative form, genitive ending, article, and gloss. For adjectives: 2nd declension masculine form, 1st declension feminine ending, 2nd declension neuter ending, and gloss. For other adjectives: 3rd declension masculine and feminine forms, 3rd declension neuter ending, and gloss. For verbs in the indicative, subjunctive, or optative moods: lexical entry, verbal form, voice, mood, person, number, and gloss. For infinitive verbs: lexical entry, verbal form, voice, mood, and gloss. For participle verbs: lexical entry, verbal form, voice, mood, gender, number, case, and gloss (p. xiii-xiv).

There are certain design aspects of this edition that might be perceived as shortcomings by some readers. These will be discussed first. The font size used in the footnotes is significantly smaller than the font size of the main body of Greek text and may be a little too small for some users. The pages are formatted with

generous marginal spaces so that it would not have been difficult to increase the font size of the footnotes slightly for clarity without sacrificing page length.

Definitions for the words that occur 30 times or less in the New Testament are at times “not contextually determined” (xiii). Those familiar with the Greek New Testament reader’s editions published by the United Bible Society and by Zondervan may be disappointed at this editorial decision. For example, the UBS Reader’s Greek New Testament, which offers definitions for words that occur 30 times or less in the Greek New Testament, considers the immediate and surrounding context when providing glosses.

ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ is not a critical edition of Ignatius’s letters. The introduction to the life of Ignatius is rather brief, and no map is provided revealing the route of Ignatius through Asia Minor or the location of the cities that received a letter from him. Critical notes indicating textual difficulties in the manuscripts and notations of biblical quotations or allusions are lacking. Users who are expecting a fully updated and exhaustive handbook comparable to those edited by Michael Holmes, Kirsopp Lake, or J. B. Lightfoot may be disappointed.

Despite the above critiques, when users consider the overall purpose behind this new reader, then the design features (the lack of critical notes and the smaller font sizes) are not a cause for criticism. The editors note that this “Greek reader intends to aid reading and to foster the ability to translate quickly with minimal effort” and the definitions and parsing information given in the footnotes was not “designed to supplement rigorous lexical studies” (p. xiv). The compact size and portability make up for any shortcomings in the use of smaller font sizes. The generous spaces between the footnotes allow the eye to quickly locate the relevant gloss. The lack of critical notes and marginalia facilitate minimal distraction and create a clean and uncluttered appearance on the page.

Similar resources are available in the recently produced *A Reader’s Lexicon of the Apostolic Fathers*, but this is not a standalone resource and only supplements Michael Holmes’s edition of *The Apostolic Fathers*. Thus, those who wish to read through the letters of Ignatius using Holmes’s edition and *A Reader’s Lexicon* require fumbling between two handbooks which seriously hampers the portability and practicality of leisurely reading that *ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ* provides.

Though some may find the introduction to Ignatius brief, it is sufficient in orienting the reader to the life and works of the bishop. The editors write that, “although the *AFGR* is not an introduction like Lightfoot’s, it nevertheless invites readers to encounter firsthand the texts of the Apostolic Fathers thus preparing them to explore nascent Christianity” (p. x). Consequently, readers should not expect a thoroughly updated critical handbook of Ignatius’s letters, as this was never the intended purpose behind the work. The brevity of the volume is part of the overall design as the reader is encouraged to engage the text directly in order to gain a more detailed understanding of Ignatius and his letters. For those wishing to study further, the bibliography at the end of the introduction directs users to relevant scholarly treatments and each work is placed into a beginner, intermediate, or advanced category (p. 6-7).

Because this work is located in a graded tier system, readers can orient themselves within the context of a larger collection of language resources. This system would work particularly well in a classroom setting. Instructors have the ability to assign appropriately graded texts to students as they advance through various stages of language acquisition.

Students, Greek instructors, and any who wish to advance their Greek reading comprehension will benefit from *ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΥ* and from the *AFGR* series as a whole. The sheer affordability makes the series accessible to students who are already overburdened by ballooning textbook costs. This volume should be on the shelf of anyone who regularly reads and studies early Christian writings in the original languages.

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Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion. By Os Guinness. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015, 272 pp., \$22.00

Os Guinness (DPhil, Oxford) seeks to dismantle the false dichotomy of human interconnectedness and evangelism in today's pluralistic world in his recent book *Fool's Talk*. Guinness aims to accomplish this through two means: creative persuasion and "advocacy of the heart" (p. 18). However, he finds that Christians simply do not understand how to utilize them. Guinness offers a simple but loaded solution for Christians—become a fool for Christ. "Jesus was cruelly mocked before the highest religious leaders of his day, before the representatives of the best law of the day, and before the mightiest political and military power of his day" (p. 68). Guinness is clear that the purpose of his book is to teach Christians how to be persuasive ultimately to win souls for Christ.

Guinness provides a clear definition of creative persuasion and advocacy of the heart as a preface to the book in the introduction. Persuasion is "the art of speaking to people who, for whatever reason, are indifferent or resistant to what we have to say," while advocacy of the heart is "an existential approach to sharing our faith...deeper and more faithful as well as more effective than the common approaches used by many" (p. 18). The book will be divided into three logical parts to promote continuity: Part One (Ch. 1, 2, 5, 8, 10) the predisposition of humanity against God, Part Two (Ch. 3, 7, 9) evidence for absolute truth through Christ, and Part Three (Ch. 4, 6, 11) the application of apologetics and evangelism in the life of a Christian. Each part will offer a summary followed by critical analysis of Guinness' methodology and claims.

In Part One, Guinness makes central the issue of the inherent predisposition to reject God in today's society. "Most people quite simply are not open, not interested, and not needy..." in today's post-Christian and pluralistic Western World (p. 22). In chapter two, Guinness warns against the "McDonaldization" of evangelists' methodology in which an impersonal approach is internalized and then forced on the unsaved—a vastly ineffective approach. Guinness makes two key points in the second chapter: all Christians are responsible to advocate for Christ and every person is unique and deserves an approach that respects their uniqueness. In chapter five, Guinness addresses the intellectuals in context of the inherent disposition to reject God by explaining that, at times, their intelligence outdistances their morals (p. 83). Chapters eight and ten challenge Christians and non-believers alike to accept they are hypocrites and constantly reevaluate their own worldview. By taking a pluralistic worldview to its extreme, Guinness suggests many will not like the result, making them prone to conversion (p. 152). While Guinness advocates for the resolution of hypocrisy as a means of authority for evangelism, providing a six-step method on how to do so is overwhelming to the reader and should not be included.

In Part Two, Guinness establishes that absolute truth is essential to maintain order in society, and that it is found solely in Christ. The central tension Christians wrestle with is the need to find truth; however, they fail to properly

utilize the Word of God. Guinness states, “God may be trusted in all situations, despite everyone and everything” (p. 48). Evangelism is not about the individual configuring the precise formula to convert non-believers, using the Bible as a mere ingredient—the Bible is absolute truth alone. Guinness delves further in chapter seven as he exposes the instability of relativism as it opposes absolute truth. Auden writes, “Either we serve the unconditional/ Or some Hitlerian monster will supply/ An iron convention to do evil by” as the breakdown of relativism unless one is willing to accept that all opinions, even Hitler’s, are acceptable (p. 133). Guinness concludes this section by demanding the practice of “taking scalps is a bad habit associated with some styles of evangelism” in reference to approaching each individual with love (p. 170).

In Part Three, Guinness affirms that apologetics and evangelism are not mutually exclusive by clarifying that “the work of apologetics is only finished when the door to the gospel has been opened and the good news of the gospel can be proclaimed” (p. 111). He proposed Christians utilize both of these tools by being a fool, then outlines the three types of fools. First, the Fool Proper is an actual fool, determined by God. Second, a Fool for Christ is not actually a fool but is treated like one for Christ’s sake. Third, the Fool Maker “is the person who (once again) is not a fool at all, but who is prepared to be seen and treated as a fool, so that from the position of derided folly, he or she may be able to bounce back and play jester, addressing truth to power, pricking the balloons of the high and mighty, and telling the emperor that he has no clothes” (p. 72). Guinness emphasizes embodying the role of a fool as a method of this hybrid apologetics-evangelism technique. Guinness is outlining a specific methodology through the example of the fools, contrasting the initial claim that techniques would not be included in his book.

While Guinness claims *Fool’s Talk* is not a book about the methodology of evangelizing, chapter nine goes through a step-by-step method on the topic of evangelism. The second half of this book is largely repetitive; chapter seven and eight would assimilate very nicely in chapter two while nine and ten are largely similar to chapter one. Chapter 12 includes next steps for new Christians and simply does not belong to the book at all. While this book is disorganized, as seen through the restructuring into three parts, all the information is present and compelling.

This book is recommended to those who value evangelism as a command from Jesus. This book is aimed at individuals who are seeking to mature in their spiritual discipline and desire to win souls for Christ.

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Return to Me: A Biblical Theology of Repentance. By Mark J. Boda. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2015, 198 pp., \$17.60 paperback.

Return to Me is the most recent in the New Studies in Biblical Theology monograph series. These volumes are intended to delve deeper into certain of the basic topics of Biblical Theology. The series editor, D. A. Carson, explains the purpose of the works of the NSBT series in the following way: “Above all, these monographs are creative attempts to help thinking Christians understand their Bibles better.” He continues, “The series aims simultaneously to instruct and to edify, to interact with the current literature and to point the way ahead” (p. 11).

Mark J. Boda is Professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. He is the author of several books, such as the NICOT commentary on Zechariah (2015), the Cornerstone Biblical Commentary on 1 and 2 Chronicles, and *A Severe Mercy*, in addition to *Repentance in Christian Theology*. He is also an editor of the IVP *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*.

Boda begins by reviewing the lexical stock for repentance in both the New Testament and the Hebrew Scriptures. He goes on to define repentance from Zechariah 1:1-6 and Acts 26:16-20. He writes, “Therefore, repentance in this study refers foremost to a turn or return to faithful relationship with God from a former state of estrangement” (p. 31). It is this relational aspect that is at the root of repentance. It is all about turning from the world and the flesh and turning toward the Creator and Redeemer.

Examining the Old Testament, Dr. Boda expands on his definition of repentance. The author begins his treatment of repentance in the Hebrew Scriptures by pointing to the first place that the theme of repentance is found, Genesis 4, pointing out that this story foreshadows humanity’s struggle to fully embrace repentance (p. 36). As he traces penitential vocabulary and themes through the Old Testament, Boda also reveals what he refers to as the penitential process. The basic structure of the process is as follows: Israel sins, Yahweh warns often through a prophet, Israel responds (either positively with obedience or negatively with not believing), and Yahweh responds in relation to the response of Israel (either positively with grace or negatively with judgment). This process is evident in Isaiah 6 in the prophet’s vision in Yahweh’s temple. Boda uses 2 Kings 17 (negative), Jeremiah 18 (positive), Ezekiel 3 (negative), and Zechariah 7 (negative) as additional examples of this penitential process (p. 61-65). Boda then summarizes the dimensions, motivation, purpose, sociology, and psychology of repentance in a final chapter on the Hebrew Scriptures. He concludes the chapter with a discussion on divine disablement and enablement as well as tracing repentance through redemptive history.

Boda continues his analysis of the biblical theme of repentance into the New Testament. He notes how repentance is preached and taught in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, John’s Gospel, the Epistles, and Revelation. The Synoptic Gospels are filled with both examples of penitential vocabulary as well as stories with the concept of repentance without the verbiage. The author points to Zacchaeus and the

Prodigal son as examples of stories in the Synoptics with penitential themes (p. 167). While John reveals an apparent lack of penitential vocabulary, John 12:38-40 shows that repentance is to be understood in terms of belief in Jesus. With this perspective in mind, one finds that the theme of repentance is ubiquitous in the Fourth Gospel (p. 168-9). The Epistles of the New Testament display the importance of repentance in the teachings of the first century church. Boda notes passages such as Romans 12, Ephesians 4, Philippians 3, Colossians 3, Hebrews 12, James 4 and 1 Peter 3 among others. Dr. Boda concludes this chapter with a summary of repentance in Revelation. In the thirteenth chapter, he summarizes the penitential theology of the New Testament in the same way he did the Old Testament, tracing repentance in redemptive history. In his final chapter, Mark Boda discusses the theological implications of this study on repentance. He first establishes the unity of the biblical witness on repentance in the canon. He continues to state that repentance at the core of the gospel, in both redemption as well as sanctification. It is both the key to entrance into the kingdom as well as the way of life for the believer. Professor Boda concludes his work by advocating that those in ministry teach believers to live lives that are marked by seeking the Lord's forgiveness and cleansing from sin (p. 196) as well as the importance of a penitent community.

In tracing the repentance of God's people, Dr. Boda takes an unusual but effective approach to establishing a biblical theology of a given subject. Carson states in the introduction that many theologians approaching repentance as a word study or a synthesis of theological ideas, while others represent a polemic against opposing viewpoints (p. 11). Instead, Boda combines the word study approach with laying out the foundational concepts behind a theology of repentance. Professor Boda writes: "The key to understanding the theme of repentance...is not meaning of particular words, but rather the broader meaning of the passages that communicate this theological concept through a variety of words, images, and stories related to repentance" (p. 163). This is an excellent approach as it seeks to strike a balance between the two methods usually taken to establish a biblical theology.

Boda's definition, taken from Zech. 1 and Acts 26, identifies the repair of the relationship between man and God as the foundation of repentance. In addition, to the relational aspect foundational to a biblical theology of repentance, the Scriptures reveal behavioral, affective, and verbal/ritual dimensions of repentance. The behavioral aspect refers to an individual's change in lifestyle, while the affective aspect refers to the "all one's heart" nature of the act of repentance. The verbal/ritual dimension makes reference to penitential declarations and rites such as fasting and sacrifice. These three do not occur every time repentance is addressed, but the biblical authors at least focus on one of these dimensions of the process of restoring the relationship of man, both individual and corporate, with God.

Boda also points out a brilliant connection in the Gospel of John. He shows that the beloved disciple used the contrasting stories of Peter and Judas to powerfully depict the choice of the individual to repent (p. 170 cf). Throughout John

13, Christ predicts their coming failures. The story is resumed in chapter 18 with Jesus being delivered to the Romans and Jews (2-3) and Peter cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant (10) followed by his denial (12-27). It is at the point of their individual failures that the paths of these men diverge. Although Judas is never mentioned again in the narrative, Peter and his repentance take center stage in much of the remainder of the Gospel. The contrast of Peter and Judas fits with a theme that runs throughout John. John often uses the theme of the contrasting ways of light and darkness, with "Judas representing darkness where the devil/Satan rules and Peter representing the light where Jesus reigns" (p. 171).

This theme of the two paths is reminiscent of a similar theme in wisdom literature. Psalm 1 differentiates between these two ways: Blessed is the man...The ungodly are not so (Ps 1:1, 4). Boda writes, "This contrast is implicitly penitential, in one's turning from the way of the wicked to the way of the righteous" (p. 116).

Dr. Boda points out that the book of Exodus reveals the fact that there can be, on occasion, a disconnect between the different aspects of repentance. This is visible in the story of Moses' encounter with Pharaoh. Boda notes that, in Exodus 9, Pharaoh confesses his sin and guilt, then promises to change his actions. However, Moses notes that this is insincere in verse 35. The author writes, "Repentance may be expressed orally through confession of sin and intention to change, but this must be accompanied by sincerity of heart and change of behavior" (p. 37). This passage exposes the fact that the penitent man not only repents verbally and changes his deeds, but his life and heart change as well. This is vital today as one sees that true repentance involves the Holy Spirit changing the heart, instead of a man merely attempting to change his own actions.

One drawback to Boda's approach is his lack of interaction with the NT. In a book of close to 200 pages, fewer than 30 deal with the New Testament Scriptures. While most of the books from the Hebrew Bible are dealt with individually, several of the New Testament books are handled together. For example, Boda deals with the synoptic gospels and Acts together. These books are written by three different authors with differing themes and purposes. There is no reason that these could not have been given separate treatments or at least been given more attention than six pages. This is easily explained by the fact that Professor Boda's focus is the Old Testament. However, to gather a biblical theology of repentance, one should deal with the entire Bible.

While not necessarily a drawback to the author's approach, Boda does not address the theme of repentance in the literature of the Second Temple period. A brief chapter on the deuterocanonical literature would have been helpful in establishing the mindset of the Jewish leadership at the time of Christ. This could determine how one ought to understand how to interpret Jesus' own teaching on repentance as he relates to his audience, as well as the audience of the gospels in their written format.

In spite of these drawbacks, *Return to Me* is a refreshing approach biblical theology. He seeks to formulate a theology of repentance, not simply based on the definitions of key words, but by also addressing key passages on the theme. This

volume of the New Studies in Biblical Theology would be a good addition to any student of the Bible, whether in the academic or the pastoral arena.

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