
Book Reviews

The Sufficiency of Scripture

Noel Weeks

*Banner of Truth, 309 pp hdbk,
£11.95*

In this book, Dr Weeks responds to recent discussions about the Bible and is concerned because there has been 'a shift in the debate to the point that the older positions (eg evangelical/liberal) are no longer so clearly defined' (p xi). The book aims, therefore, to highlight and examine the principles and arguments in the current debate.

Part One of the book deals with Basic Issues such as Authority and Exhaustiveness, the Form of Biblical Teaching, General and Special Revelation, Providence and Scripture, the Bible and Technical Precision, Imprecision and Error, the History of Revelation, the Perfect Translation, Words and Meanings, the Bible and the Historian, the Human Element in Scripture, Contextualization, the Hermeneutical Circle, the Redemptive Focus of Scripture. All these chapters are brief but penetrating and analytical; defective views of, and attitudes to, Scripture are exposed in a logical and firm manner.

In *Part Two*, Dr Weeks deals in considerably more detail with Points of Contention such as creation, interpreting prophecy, women in teaching/ruling offices in the Church, slavery, worship and government of the Church, the Scripture and 'advances'

in psychology, 'Rabbinic' exegesis in the New Testament, pseudepigraphy, proving the Bible, freedom and honesty, the political/social task of the Church, Bible translation. Some of these chapters like creation, women, "Rabbinic" exegesis, the political/social task of the Church are rich in analysis and critique yet biblical. 'Really to defend women in the teaching and ruling offices of the church', concludes the author, 'one must say that Paul was wrong to appeal to the creation account and/or that the creation account itself is wrong. Once that inevitable logical step is taken it is clear that the authority of Scripture has been rejected, (p 150). Concerning the political/social task of the Church, Dr Weeks in a stimulating way repeatedly appeals to the Scripture and concludes, 'our first question....should be a question about that church as a church, not as a political lobby group. Has it been living as the church lives? Or has it been influenced by racism. social prejudice, immorality and greed? Has it sought, according to the means provided by Christ, to preach the gospel to all men? That is, not the false political 'gospel', but the Biblical gospel of freedom from sins through the sacrificial death and glorious physical resurrection of Christ....if it has failed in these things, its message to the state....will lack authority and power... (p 268).

Here is a useful, stimulating and contemporary book which I will want to return to often in the coming months.

Dr Eryl Davis BA BD, ETCW

How to Read the Psalms

Tremper Longman III

IVP 1988, 166 pp, £4.95

This work on the Psalms is a very welcome addition to IVP's selection of OT study helps, commentaries etc. Although the book's contents do not provide anything essentially original, it does provide a fresh presentation of background information necessary to increase the reader's appreciation of the Psalter. Until now most of this information has been accessible to the specialist reader only; being scattered amongst various highly technical, academic works. Tremper Longman III has successfully transferred and conveniently packaged, in paperback form, the most important and practical tools which enhance the reader's ability to understand the text. He thus achieves his main objective set out in the Preface and Introduction. The whole work is generally well founded academically and tackles relevant issues and problems using clear, effective arguments.

The most useful sections of the book are:-

Ch 1, Genres of the Psalms. This chapter provides a substantial classification of the various literary types integral to the Psalter.

Ch 6, OT Poetry, and **Ch 7, Understanding Parallelism,** both of which help clarify something of the inherent complexities of Hebrew poetry - especially the 'enigma' of Hebrew parallelism as a literary device. The exercises included at the end of each chapter helpfully facilitate the application of

the information supplied.

However, the book is not without its disappointments, the most prominent being:-

Ch 2, The origin, development and use of the Psalms. He tends to present an over vague, open-ended picture, especially with regard to the historicity and canonicity of the Psalm superscriptions. He states, 'After all the evidence has been surveyed, it is best to treat the titles as non-canonical, but reliable early tradition, p 41. He continues, 'Occasionally a title seems to be in tension with the content of the Psalm'. He cites Psalm 3 as an example. In establishing the fact that the Psalms are always relevant to the people of God, he suggests that during their course of usage within the OT era some of them were expanded. He argues, 'We can still see some signs that the people of God took an old Psalm and added a few verses at the end to make it even more relevant to their own situation' p 46. He cites Psalms 51:18 and 69:35 as clear examples of this practice. Both these verses are then interpreted as stemming from a post-exilic situation, ie centuries after their original composition in the Davidic era.

Ch 8 Imagery in the Psalms. He argues that within the Psalter some of the imagery is based on the religions of Israel's pagan neighbours, cf Psalm 74:12-14, which is said to be combining elements pertaining to an Eastern mythology; ie Baal's destruction of Yamm, the sea god (Ugaritic literature) and Marduk's defeat of the sea goddess Tiamat (Babylonian litera-

ture). See also comment on Psalm 48:1-2, p 121f.

Ch 11, **Psalm 130: Thank you, Lord, for healing me.** His concept of a progressive revelation of divine truth seems too narrow, especially with regard to belief in the Resurrection. He argues, '....there is not a great deal of *clear* teaching in the OT about the resurrection of the dead. The clear teaching concerning *heaven* awaits the NT. The OT knows of continued *existence* after death but in a *shadowy* place known as Sheol. The Psalmist was uncertain whether he could praise God from Sheol' p 147.

John Sieczko BA

Lectures in Hebrew and OT at ETCW

Psalm 119

Thomas Manton

Banner of Truth, 1990, 3 Vols, c 580 pp per vol, £25.00

Readers of the FOUNDATIONS will no doubt be familiar with Thomas Manton's exposition of the Epistle of James.

The Trust has now published a 3 volume set reprint of Manton's exposition of Psalm 119. The work consists of sermons preached by him in his usual course of three times-a-week. Not all of the verses of the Psalm are expounded and some verses form the basis for more than one sermon.

As could be expected, the exposition is thorough. There is a constant emphasis on the need to conform to

God's Law as a Scriptural and Biblical view of holiness. Writing in 1680, Vincent Alsop comments on the sermons in the work, that 'Their design is practice; beginning with the understanding, dealing with the affections, but still driving on the advancement of practical holiness.'

As often, his writing is made vivid with metaphors and similies. Thus in a comment on verse 9, Manton describes the Word as 'the glass that discovereth sin, and the water that washeth it away'.

This particular edition incorporates a biographical essay of Dr Manton but as with reprints of older works there are minor drawbacks such as the presence of some archaisms of speech. Some readers may also find the print a little small, but these cannot detract from the value and usefulness of the work.

Iwan Rhys Jones, ETCW

Under this word 'law' there is no doubt but that David comprehended the sum of all the doctrine which God gave his church.

Calvin on Ps 119:153

This, the 119th Psalm, is the Psalm I have often had recourse to when I could find no spirit of prayer in my own heart, and at length the fire was kindled, and I could pray.

Henry Venn's letters
