

Beyond The Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology. By I. Howard Marshall. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004, 136 pp., \$13.99 paper.

Beyond the Bible, the most recent outcome of the Hayward Lectureship at Acadia Divinity College, is designed, like the Lectureship in general, as a succinct study assessing biblical and theological issues and presenting the most recent findings to nonspecialists in a way that is accessible and rewarding (2). The intention of these lectures was to propose a biblically legitimate way to move from the Bible to doctrine, to “go beyond the Bible to get to theology biblically” (95). The Lectures were given by Dr. Marshall, but the book includes not only his three lectures, but also responses by Kevin Vanhoozer and Stanley Porter which further supports the idea that hermeneutics should be a conversation not a monologue.

Chapter 1 is merely prolegomenary information on the issues surrounding evangelical hermeneutics and few will take issue with anything other than minor differences of opinion. The great strength of this chapter is the brevity and clarity with which he brings to light the problems of Packer’s article “Understanding the Bible: Evangelical Hermeneutics.” Specifically, he mentions that while authorial intention is important, it unfortunately ignores the question of *sensus plenior* and that while Evangelicals hold to the truth of the Bible, this does not answer the question of what precisely truth means. In Chapter 2 he looks at both a conservative and progressive hermeneutical approach to ethics, worship, and doctrine. He continues that while most would agree that there is a need to modify worship and ethics for a new cultural and temporal context, it is not as acceptable to argue for modifications in doctrine. But while this may be the general consensus, Marshall shows that doctrine does indeed progress within the pages of the Bible and that with this in mind, we are to look for scriptural principles to guide our

own continued doctrinal development. Although adumbrated earlier, it is not until chapter 3 that we see the true beginnings of criteria for going beyond the Bible. His first principle is that the NT authors were Christ-centered and interpreted the OT in light of this. Second, Jesus' own teaching was underdeveloped due to his own epochal and cultural context. And lastly, our interpretations, like those of the apostles, are to be based on a combination of the word and insights received from the Holy Spirit.

Vanhoozer accepts the basic principle of Marshall's plan but questions some of Marshall's specific applications. Especially troubling to him is Marshall's attempt to relativize Jesus' doctrine of God. Vanhoozer disagrees with Marshall's suggestion that it is inappropriate for us to view God as one who destroys entire nations. Vanhoozer then summarizes three earlier views of Calvin, Webb, and Wolterstorff for going beyond the Bible and closes with a canonical approach that takes seriously all three.

Porter's article is not really a response to Marshall as much as an organization of recent hermeneutical approaches like the historical-critical method, Speech-Act theory and the approach of Wittgenstein. He does briefly interact with Marshall and concludes with his own perspective on the matter. His contribution is that Paul (the premier interpreter) held certain presuppositions about Jesus, God, and Christianity in general. Further, he argues that translation theory is a good model for arriving at theological meaning. What he means by this is that one must first determine the kernel or heart of what is being said in the original text, then put the kernel into the equivalent form of expression in today's theological language so that it has the same effect on the present receiver as it did on the first hearer.

The strengths of this book are its brevity, its structure, and its rallying call. It introduces and wrestles with the tough questions without taking up too much of the reader's time.

Structurally, it has allowed two responses from evangelical experts in the area which has forced the reader both to entertain new ideas based on the original lectures and to go beyond them. And it did indeed inspire me anew to break down the theological/biblical wall. At the same time, I did not feel the questions asked nor the suggestions made by Marshall were as revolutionary as Vanhoozer seemed to assert. The question of how to move from the Bible to doctrine is indeed important, but don't expect this book to solve the problems. Instead of an orderly technique for arriving at solutions, Marshall is really only able to suggest boundaries within which our hermeneutical work should be done. But we should expect no more; the fluidity of the topic as well as the concision of the book make final answers impossible and so none of the contributors were able to do more than make beginning suggestions towards the future and call me into dialogue. Still, awareness and stimulation are in themselves important contributions and this book should be commended.

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