

Paul, The Law, and Justification. By Colin G. Kruse. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997, 320 pp., n.p.

Colin's Kruse's work on the law and justification was published in 1996 by InterVarsity Press in England, and now Hendrickson publishers has made the volume available for American readers. Kruse begins his book with a survey of scholarship on the law and justification, including brief expositions of the views of Montefiore, Foot Moore, Schweitzer, Davies, Schoeps, Stendahl, Drane, Hübner, Sanders, Räisänen, Dunn, Gaston, Westerholm, Thielman, Martin, Tomson, Wright, and Schreiner. His survey of the various views is lucid and is a fine introduction to twentieth century scholarship on the law. If readers desire a thorough survey of the issue of justification, another work is preferable. Kruse interacts with justification insofar as it relates to the law. His book does not tackle justification in its own right with any detail.

The heart of the book examines the four major letters of Paul: Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. Kruse devotes a separate chapter for each letter, with the addition of an extra chapter for Romans. After examining the Hauptbriefe, Kruse investigates the contribution of the other Pauline letters to the subject at hand in a single chapter. The final chapter of the book summarizes the major conclusions.

One of the advantages of Kruse's view is that his view of the law and justification are explained through a careful exegesis of the respective letters. Paul's theology of the law is gleaned by interpreting each letter in context instead of a topical approach where the major themes relative to the law are treated. The exegesis is consistently sane and conversant with modern scholarship. If one were to place Kruse on the map of Pauline

interpreters, his view on Paul and the law is rather similar to that of F. F. Bruce.

A sampling of some of his major conclusions should be useful. Though Paul's thinking on the law is complex, he should not be dismissed as a contradictory thinker. Discerning the Pauline meaning in context yields a coherent understanding of the law. The issue of "works of law" in Galatians arises out of the boundary marker issues of circumcision and the observance of the calendar, but even in Galatians "works of law" cannot be confined to such badges, and in Romans "works of law" focuses on the moral demands of the law. Those of the works of the law are cursed, and the reason for the curse is not because works of law are legalistic. The curse exists because people fail to keep all that the law requires. The Judaism of Paul's day was not intrinsically legalistic, but legalism easily arose for those consumed with nomism. Paul countered such legalism in his letters, and maintained that a new era of salvation history has dawned with the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, the law is no longer in force for believers in Christ. The Mosaic Torah is confined to the era before Christ's coming and should not be imposed on believers today. What continuing role does the law play in the life of Christians? Kruse argues that the moral demands of the law are no longer binding on believers. Paul appeals to the law in paradigmatic ways for Christian ethics and sees the demands of the law fulfilled in the law of love. He does not, Kruse insists, impose the demands of the Mosaic law upon believers in Christ.

Kruse does not interact as extensively with the issue of justification, but his examination of this issue is of interest as well. Justification in Paul cannot be restricted to forensic categories, though the latter are included. Kruse concurs with Piper that the overarching idea in justification is God acting for the sake of his name. Under this wide-

ranging category, righteousness in Paul is said to include distributive justice, God's covenant faithfulness, his saving righteousness, a right relationship with God, and a righteousness which leads to life. On the issue of justification more thorough study is needed to establish Kruse's conclusions. His definition of justification is so all-embracing that one wonders if it accurately represents New Testament evidence. In any case, a more thorough defense is needed to demonstrate the validity of Kruse's view.

It is questionable whether Kruse's sharp distinction between the demands of the law of Christ and the demands of the Mosaic law can stand. Paul certainly appeals to the law analogically and paradigmatically. But it is doubtful that the only binding requirement of the Mosaic law can be restricted to love. Love is the heart and soul of the Pauline ethic. But Rom. 13:8-10 also suggests that the moral norms of the Mosaic law constitute love. I have no quarrel with those who say that these demands from the Mosaic law are binding as the law of Christ--as long as it is acknowledged that some of the moral norms of the OT law still remain binding for believers in Christ.

Despite the above reservation, the work of Kruse is to be welcomed as a significant contribution to Paul's understanding of the law. The "new perspective" launched by Sanders and elaborated by Dunn has certainly provoked scholars to reconsider Paul's theology of law. A number of works, including Thielman and now Kruse, call into question some of the sweeping claims made by Sanders and Dunn. We can be grateful to Colin Kruse for calling us back to a more balanced view, one that is anchored in the Pauline text.

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