

Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. xvii + 1038, \$45.00.

This massive volume represents something almost unheard of in technical biblical scholarship in this era. Charles Scobie offers a biblical theology of the entire Bible. Theologies of the NT or OT or works that concentrate on various themes in biblical theology are common, but virtually no one attempts to write a whole Bible theology. One of the remarkable features of the work is the lucidity and clarity that characterize the study. What Scobie writes is surely accessible to college students with a desire to acquaint themselves with biblical theology.

The book is split into two parts. The first part functions as prolegomena to biblical theology and comprises about one hundred pages. Scobie considers the following topics: 1) the definition of biblical theology; 2) the history of the discipline; 3) new directions in biblical theology; 4) the method of biblical theology; and 5) the structure of biblical theology. Scobie proposes “an intermediate biblical theology” in which the discipline functions as a bridge between academic study and service to the church. Biblical theology must be rooted in history, but it cannot be neutral. We must bring presuppositions to our work, and yet always be ready to have those presuppositions critiqued and evaluated. Biblical theology cannot be equated with “history of religion,” and hence the canon functions as the limit for such study, and Christians should agree that the canon is closed. Scobie essentially accepts the Protestant canon for his study, though, he appeals to works in the apocrypha and Roman Catholic canonical tradition to shed light on the text.

He maintains that biblical theology is concerned with the final form of the text instead of basing conclusions on its alleged pre-history. He argues that the OT must be read “in light of the NT, and vice versa” (p. 75). Each piece of literature can be considered for its contribution, but it does not follow that every writing is of the same value. Romans is clearly more important than 2 Peter for instance. Scobie proposes a multi-thematic approach rooted in the topics arising from scripture.

The remainder of the book is part two in which Scobie sets forth his whole Bible theology. He divides the study into four sections: 1) God’s Order; 2) God’s Servant; 3) God’s People; and 4) God’s Way. Under God’s Order he has chapters on a) the Living God, b) the Lord of Creation, c) the Lord of History, d) the Adversary, and e) the Spirit. The section on God’s Servant includes chapters on a) the Messiah, b) the Son of Man, c) Glory, Word, Wisdom, Son; d) the Servant’s Suffering; and e) the Servant’s Vindication. The third part on God’s people studies a) the Covenant Community; b) the Nations; c) Land and City; d) Worship; and e) Ministry. The section on God’s Way concludes the work with chapters on a) the Human Condition; b) Faith and Hope; c) God’s Commandments; d) Love Your Neighbor; and 5) Life. If we look at the plan of the book as a whole, we see that he emphasizes God, Christ, God’s people, and the way God’s people should live.

We do not have space, obviously, to interact in detail with Scobie. We must applaud anyone who has the courage to attempt such a massive undertaking, for to write this book one must know both OT and NT theology, and Scobie demonstrates such knowledge consistently in his work. Furthermore, he is clearly conversant with secondary sources and they are woven into the work throughout. The author clearly read

prodigiously in completing his *magnum opus*. And yet the book is written simply and clearly and is uncluttered by jargon.

Scobie's approach to biblical theology is also convincing. He eschews the kind of historicism that a priori strips the text of the supernatural. He approaches the text as canonical scripture, as God's word to his people. After exploring the various themes in their OT and then the NT context, he considers the message for God's people today. No one, of course, will agree with all of Scobie's conclusions. Still, Scobie's work should be saluted for taking the canon seriously and because he has attempted to set forth in all their diversity and unity major scriptural themes. Scobie is surely on target when he argues that God and Christ are major themes in biblical theology. God's People and God's Way are certainly central themes as well. It seems, however, that his structure puts less emphasis than warranted on God's saving work in Christ. Naturally, the latter theme is not excluded by Scobie, and yet a more prominent place in the chapter titles is necessary. Nevertheless, we can be grateful for a work that takes scripture seriously as the word of God, believes it voices a coherent message, and applies it to today's world.

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