

BOOK REVIEW

Bauckham, Richard, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015). xvii + 237 pp. Pbk. \$24.99.

In this introductory volume, Richard Bauckham contributes to the scholarship on Johannine theology by considering several ‘major themes’, as the title claims. Given that this book lacks an introduction and a conclusion, the reader may wonder how he plans to cover these major themes, why he decided to, and how this book relates to Johannine theology more broadly. In fact, a casual reader of this text may assume that this book is a mere collection of essays. Although it is at least that—some having been published previously, as noted throughout the book—it is more.

In the first chapter, Bauckham considers ‘individualism’, intentionally using quotation marks in his chapter title, in the Fourth Gospel. He leaves this ‘individualism’ in quotes to distinguish his use from its popular usage in Western culture. He refers to statements concerning an individual’s relationship with Jesus, not to anything like an individualistic culture. Bauckham, however, would have done better to use a different term given its generally accepted sense. There is a clear trend in the larger theological enterprise to employ words with different meanings than they have elsewhere (e.g. intertextuality, genre, linguistics), and Bauckham’s use of this term fits this unfortunate drift.

In the second chapter he covers divine and human community. He considers the concept of ‘oneness’ as applied to God and the human community from texts like John 17. Bauckham writes, ‘The inclusion of believers in the love of the Father and the Son, through the “in-one-another” relationship of God and believers, is surely the heart of Johannine soteriology’ (p. 40).

In the third chapter, he examines the underdeveloped theme of glory in the Gospel of John. Bauckham notes, ‘Glory is a key theme in the Gospel of John, as most readers and commentators readily recognize,

but it is rarely given extended exposition' (p. 43). Bauckham then surveys the Hebrew and Greek words for glory throughout the Bible, and then focuses his attention on John's uses. This chapter, however, is unclear regarding the precise contribution it makes to the theological discussions of glory within Johannine theology because Bauckham provides little more than what scholars already have in lexicons and other rudimentary tools, and he does not relate his work to that of others within Johannine theology either.

In Chapter 4 Bauckham discusses the cross, the resurrection and exaltation. He explains, 'This is a very large topic, since the whole of John's theology is strongly focused on the death-and-resurrection/exaltation of Jesus, just as the narrative moves relentlessly toward Jesus's "hour"' (p. 63). Bauckham relates this concept to glory, love and truth in the Gospel to conclude 'in his death-and-resurrection/exaltation he incarnates the true character of God and the true way for humans to come to God' (p. 75).

In Chapter 5 he considers how John speaks to the sacraments. Bauckham explains, 'Although many aspects of the interpretation of the Gospel of John are controversial, there can hardly be a topic on which modern scholarship has exhibited such a wide range of views as that of sacraments' (p. 77). Bauckham, then, considers Rudolph Bultmann's view of the sacraments in comparison with other Johannine scholars, critiques it positively and negatively and considers the expected texts. Bauckham concludes, 'That the Gospel refers to sacraments only in secondary overtones, if at all, should be attributed to its genre as a narrative of the history of Jesus and to its topical selectivity, its concentration on key themes to the exclusion of much that might otherwise be judged important' (p. 107).

In Chapter 6 he explains various dualisms that interpreters have seen in John's Gospel. Bauckham begins with Bultmann's explanation of dualism in the Gospel, assesses it, including a critique of the hermeneutical framework of his work, compares John's dualism with that of Qumran and then provides types of dualism and duality in John's Gospel. Bauckham concludes, 'I have concluded that soteriology is the central concern in the Gospel's prominent use of both dualisms and dualities' (pp. 128-29).

In Chapter 7 Bauckham delineates dimensions of meaning in the Gospel's presentation of the First Week. He opens this chapter by stating, 'The writer of John's Gospel is constantly putting two things

together. He deploys the power of metaphor, symbol, and allegory, which illumine something by referring to it as something else' (p. 131). Bauckham proceeds to cover several comparisons that shed light into multiple dimensions of meaning that challenge a mere so-called 'literal' reading of John's Gospels.

In Chapter 8 Bauckham considers the Johannine Jesus as compared to the Synoptic Jesus. Bauckham explains, 'John is, however, as I have repeatedly stressed, very selective. Only by reducing the "literal" story to key moments and indispensable sequences—albeit told in relatively lavish details—has John allowed himself space to expound the "symbolic" meaning of it all' (p. 201).

Bauckham concludes this book with a bibliography of works cited and indices of Scripture, other ancient sources, modern authors and subjects. His choice of this kind of a bibliography is certainly fair, but it is surprising in light of the purposes of this book. One would expect a fuller bibliography allowing students to check into these matters further within Johannine studies, ideally divided into sections with appropriate subheadings, and for scholars to check for completeness and thorough consideration of the literature.

Baker Academic marketed this text for two audiences, as explained in a marketing insert I received. First, they hope that professors will use this book in courses on John's Gospel or on the four Gospels. This book could easily serve this purpose if the professor wanted to highlight various aspects of the theological themes of this book as a basic introduction. But, the subtitle of this book is misleading because it claims to cover *Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. A better subtitle would have been *Themes in Johannine Theology* because a consideration of major themes would include others—e.g. pneumatology, ecclesiology, etc.—that Bauckham did not cover. This book seems to be more focused on Bauckham's interests in Johannine theology rather than major themes in Johannine theology per se. Although there is nothing wrong with doing that, the book needs to be marketed as such.

Secondly, Baker hopes that New Testament scholars and theologians in general will reexamine the Fourth Gospel through this treatment by a 'master of their guild' (from the press release of this book). That Bauckham is a master of New Testament scholarship is a point that likely no one would question. That he is a master of the Fourth Gospel, however, remains to be determined because he has published relatively

little in Johannine studies. One can find all of his publications listed on his personal website (<http://richardbauckham.co.uk>). As I read through a list of all of his publications, I noticed only a handful of publications in this area—most of which serve as introductory works in Johannine studies. Although the current trend in the larger theological enterprise is for scholars to focus their energy on producing best-selling introductory types of publications, this trend does not guarantee or prove that someone is an expert in that area. In fact, it can prove quite the opposite. I, therefore, doubt this book will actually serve this purpose because Bauckham fails to demonstrate a robust understanding of where Johannine theology is and how it should progress beyond merely repeating dated theological methods. His theological method is dated because he seems to think that exegesis of the text leads directly to theological conclusions—as if hermeneutics does not play any role whatsoever. Yet, if the history of biblical interpretation demonstrates anything, it demonstrates that exegesis of the text does not merely lead to theological conclusions—as though one automatically determined the other. Rather, the hermeneutical and theological convictions one presently has typically drive one's theological and exegetical conclusions. Bauckham, however, does not seem to show much awareness of this issue. Yes, he writes in part for seminary students who mostly plan to exegete the biblical texts in the contexts of local churches, but they need to consider what drives their exegesis if they plan to invest their lives in that worthy and demanding work. Bauckham neglects to consider his own hermeneutical framework for interpreting Johannine theology although he points out those of others. He comments on this matter in his discussion of Bultmann's work. Yet, when it comes to Bauckham's own work, he assumes that he considers the text untethered from a hermeneutical and theological framework that might slant his own reading of the text. This aspect of this book is truly disappointing. The discussion of Bultmann would have naturally lead so well into a larger discussion of these more foundational matters.

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