

BOOK REVIEWS

Scott Adams, *Prayer in John's Farewell Discourse: An Exegetical Investigation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020). xii + 230 pp. \$49.00 hardcover; \$29.00 paperback; \$29.00 eBook.

This monograph evinces not only a concern for careful exegetical analysis of the Johannine text and exploration of pertinent background literature but also for practical application of the knowledge gleaned through such work. This is hardly surprising given the author's previous training and current balancing of vocational engagement in both the local church and the academy. Scott Adams earned both a DMin in Applied Theology from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, and a PhD in New Testament from Radboud University, Netherlands. He serves both as the lead pastor of the Midtown Location of Our Savior's Church in Lafayette, Louisiana, and as a faculty instructor at Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach, Virginia. In addition to *Prayer in John's Farewell Discourse*, Adams has recently published several articles in *Neotestamentica*, broadening the scope of his contribution to the study of prayer in the Johannine corpus with further analyses in 1 John, 3 John, and the Book of Revelation. He certainly has not wasted time in establishing himself as a key participant in scholarly research on this theme.

Chapter 1, "Introduction," articulates three reasons why the author conducts the present study on prayer in the Farewell Discourse (1–2); offers a brief survey of previous research (2–7) that "centers on the more important works that were published in the mid-to-latter part of the twentieth century" (2); elucidates the author's methodology (7–9); and presents an overview of the contents of the book (9–11). Adams describes his methodological approach as "grow[ing] out of the historical approach" and seeking "to read and analyze Christian, Jewish, and Greco-Roman texts on their own terms as they stand" (7). In his exegetical analysis of John's Gospel, the author utilizes "a synchronic, intratextual method that seeks to ascertain the fullest meaning and implication of the text as it is read closely in its present form" (8). Moreover, Adams advocates a cautious employment of Bruce Malina's approach, noting that such is not without appropriate criticism (8). This interest in social-scientific analysis remains evident throughout his

exegesis of the Johannine text as Adams not only interacts with the work of Malina but also with that of scholars such as Jerome H. Neyrey and Tricia Gates Brown. Neyrey's influence appears, for example, in interpreting John 14:2 as "heavenly relationships that occur on the earth because of Jesus's preparatory work on the believer's behalf. This work takes place in a manner similar to a patron-client relationship where relational exchange occurs between parties of unequal status. And the vital link between these two parties is the broker," a role fulfilled by Jesus (76–77, quote from 76). Another notable example occurs in the explication of the Paraclete in light of Brown's work: the Father is the patron, Jesus is the broker, the Spirit-Paraclete serves as a subordinate broker and mediator, and the disciples are the clients (101–4). Also noteworthy, and a bit surprising in the degree of its repetitiousness, Adams recurrently points the reader to Neyrey's definition of prayer (cf. 13–14, 26, 43, 49, 59–60, 70, 85, 95, 105, 119, 135, 137, 139, 178, 187, 192, 198, 206).

Three chapters explore pertinent cultural-historical background material. Chapter 2, "Jewish Prayer," aims at elucidating what can be known about Jewish views and practices associated with prayer, including evaluation of postures of prayer, the relevance of sacrifices and the Temple, prayer in the synagogue, the importance of the Shema and the Tefillah, and prayer at Qumran. Chapter 3, "Greco-Roman Prayer," briefly summarizes the Greco-Roman emphasis on precision in invoking the correct deity with the correct words, then discusses magical prayer. Chapter 4, "Prayer in the Synoptics and Acts," explores the non-Johannine narrative sections of the New Testament "to create a general profile of prayer from which the Fourth Gospel (as narrative material) may be compared and contrasted" (53). A limitation of these chapters is the author's practice of relying on the secondary literature in forming his conclusions rather than conducting his own rigorous exegetical analysis to achieve these interpretive results (see 7, where the author himself thus describes his approach as reliant on secondary sources).

Transitioning to the Johannine material, Adams devotes three chapters to the Farewell Discourse (chap. 5, "A House of Prayer: Analysis of John 14"; chap. 6, "Prayer that Produces: Analysis of John 15"; chap. 7, "Plain and Persistent Prayer: Analysis of John 16"), followed by a chapter on Jesus's prayers (chap. 8, "The Prayers of Jesus: Analysis of John 6:11; 11:41b–42; 12:27–28; 17; 19:28, 30"). While

chaps. 5–7 conduct an exegetical study of the Farewell Discourse aimed at clarifying this section’s contribution to “the Johannine profile of prayer” (69, 105; cf. 137; 163), chap. 8 seeks to discern how Jesus’s prayers on various occasions further contribute to one’s understanding of the theme of prayer in John’s Gospel (163). Chapter 9, “Conclusion,” summarizes how Adams understands the Johannine perspective on prayer, then ends with some personal reflections on the topic.

There can be little doubt that Adams makes an important contribution to our understanding of the theme of prayer within John’s Gospel. Some drawbacks should be noted, however. First, the author quotes Greek and Hebrew text throughout the volume without providing an English translation. This limits the overall accessibility of the study for those lacking training in biblical languages, whereas it removes the helpful indications of interpretive nuance that scholars might have gleaned through a comparison of the original text with the author’s translation, if such had been provided. Second, on a related point, the book lacks probing analysis of the grammatical and syntactical features of the text. Third, the exegesis sometimes strikes one as a bit thin, and the reader may be left at times wishing for a more thorough interaction with scholarly opinions on the text. For example, Adams describes the possible reading of John 19:30 as a granting of the Spirit from the cross (197), but he does so by merely summarizing the interpretation of Mary Coloe. He fails to note the complexities of this exegetical question or to engage the arguments for and against this reading found in the literature.

On a more positive note, this monograph is well written, thought-provoking, often insightful, and offers focused analysis of a neglected area of research in Johannine studies. The points of criticism articulated above do not significantly detract from the overall value and usefulness of this contribution to Johannine scholarship, nor should they dissuade anyone from consulting this important study. The book deserves the careful consideration of anyone interested in Johannine studies or a biblical understanding of prayer.

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