
This is a superb and important book for a truly Christian way of understanding the Scriptures. Hays, professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School and a highly respected scholar, provides a detailed and luminous study of how the four gospels portray Christ by “reading backwards” the Old Testament Scriptures and finding there a prefiguration of God’s messiah, who is at once the embodiment of Israel and its history and the embodied presence of the God of Israel. Hays demonstrates in rich detail how this “figural” reading of the Old Testament is done in distinctive ways by each of the evangelists. The result is that the evangelists find illumination of the figure of Christ in Old Testament texts and narratives while at the same time the figure of Christ brings new understanding of the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures themselves. This way of reading the Scriptures through the eyes of the gospel writers offers a challenge to those whose application of the historical-critical method leaves no room for such a rich theological dialectic between the testaments. Hays’s exposition of each of the gospels not only demonstrates this unique way of reading the gospels “backwards” in relation to the Old Testament but also offers the contemporary reader a rich appreciation of the theology of each of the gospels.


Interpreting the meaning of the Beatitudes is always a challenging task. How are the poor, the meek, and those who mourn to be considered “blessed”? In this brief but beautiful and profound study George Hunsinger, professor of systematic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, opens the meaning of this powerful text of Matthew’s gospel. His basic stance is to portray Jesus himself at the center of the beatitudes, identifying with those in need and leading the way for those who are to be faithful in responding to those in need. In each instance Hunsinger probes the biblical context in an effortless and competent way and then turns to the wider implications of Jesus’ teaching for contemporary Christian discipleship.


Many interpreters of Paul’s Christology discount the importance of royal categories or motifs, implying even that Paul uses the term “Christ” as something of a proper name for Jesus rather than as a royal title (i.e., the “anointed one”). In this thorough and cogent analytical study Joshua Jipp, assistant professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, convincingly demonstrates that Paul did in fact understand Christ as king. The apostle drew on several strands of traditions within Greco-Roman and Jewish literature that reflected on the “good king”—the all-pervasive form of political governance in the ancient world. However, Paul did not simply impose these characteristics on Jesus but redefined the meaning of the good king in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This vision of Jesus as king also helped Paul understand the relationship of the Risen Christ to his “subjects,” that is, the church. This is a very constructive contribution to Pauline studies.