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Sacrifice and Atonement: Psychological Motives and Biblical Patterns

Stephen Finlan

Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016, 978-1-5064-0196-6, \$25.99, xx + 234 pb

According to Finlan, salvation needs to be detached from the crucifixion because 'atonement theology pictures a sacrifice-demanding God who is not free to forgive' (p. 188). Behind the ritual purification achieved through sacrificial atonement, Finlan discerns an underlying psychology of disgust, while the need to appease God is rooted in childhood strategies for placating angry parents. For Finlan, the idea of sacrifice is inherently selfish and manipulative, and the very concept of atonement is so compromised by its psychological associations that it should be abandoned in favour of what he sees as Jesus' original proclamation of salvation and wholeness without the need for any transaction or payment. Chapters exploring sacrifice are followed by a discussion of attachment theory, and an analysis of Paul and Hebrews.

Finlan does not shy away from being deliberately controversial. The large typeface, the accessible style and the level of argumentation all indicate that this book is aimed at churches rather than scholars. His thesis is vulnerable to criticism: OT scholars may dispute the view that a compensatory view of sacrifice was crucial to the Israelite cult, while NT scholars may want to challenge his claim that it was decades before ideas of atonement contaminated the original good news proclaimed by Jesus. Nevertheless, Finlan does highlight how the language of atonement can reinforce the psychological damage suffered by the victims of abusive parenting. While those who preach on the atonement may disagree with Finlan, they cannot afford to ignore his insights into the psychological connotations of atonement language.

Timothy Carter

Saved through Fire: The Fiery Ordeal in New Testament Eschatology

Daniel Frayer-Griggs

Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016, 978-1-4982-0325-8, \$36.00, xix + 279 pb

This monograph explores the language of fire used for the eschatological ordeal for all humanity (not the fire of Gehenna), seeking to emphasize its reference to a test. Chapter 1 reviews scholarly opinion concerning fire, this is followed by a brief discussion of metaphorical language and methodology. Chapter 2 selects OT references to fire with particular relevance to NT fire imagery, emphasizing its role in purification; Chapter 3 examines judgment fire in Second Temple Period apocalyptic literature, where a purificatory function is also identified. Attention then turns to Mk 9.49, Lk. 12.49-50, 17.26-32 and 23.31 arguing that many of these texts concern an ordeal that all must pass through (including the disciples and Jesus). The last two chapters are briefer and include discussion of texts like 1 Cor. 3.10-15 and 2 Pet. 3.3-4, which are both seen in the light of Mal. 3 introducing a purificatory element.

This is an interesting examination of often neglected texts; Frayer-Griggs makes a careful case for a purificatory role of the fiery ordeal, maintaining that this does not require a doctrine of purgatory. This reviewer would like to question some of the more literal approaches taken to the language of eschatological texts (see p. 22) and question