



Warrington, Keith.

Discovering Jesus in the New Testament

Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009. Pp. xiii + 226. Paper. \$19.95
ISBN 9781598560114.

Nick Norelli

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

Keith Warrington is the Vice-Principal and Director of Doctoral Studies at Regents Theological College in West Malvern, England. *Discovering Jesus in the New Testament* is his comprehensive survey of "each NT author's presentation of Jesus' person and mission with reference to its commonality with that of the other NT writers and its unique contribution to the larger portrait of Jesus depicted in the NT." (1) The 27 books of the NT are covered over the course of 21 chapters with obvious groupings of books in some chapters, i.e., the Synoptic Gospels (chapter 1); 1-2 Thessalonians (chapter 12); 1-2 Timothy (chapter 13); 1-2 Peter (chapter 18); and 1-3 John (chapter 19). Each chapter begins with a brief note about the authorship, audience, and reason for writing the book being covered but Warrington admits that such matters are peripheral to his interests so he doesn't go into any detail concerning them. Perhaps it's worth noting at this point that he credits the Apostle Paul with writing all of the books that bear his name.

Warrington recognizes that the NT does not answer all of the complex Trinitarian questions that have arisen throughout church history, as well as the fact that no single writer presents a comprehensive Christology, yet he nonetheless reads the NT through Trinitarian/Christological lenses, feeling free to employ the language that was a product of those later debates in his discussion of the NT evidence. His approach is quite simple and straightforward in that he goes through each book or group of books noting the significant Christological and soteriological data. This includes anything dealing with the titles or works of Jesus (to include the working of

Jesus through his disciples in the chapter on Acts) as well as the attitudes of others towards Jesus. In his chapter on the Synoptics he first presents the unified picture that the Gospels paint (which seems heavily slanted towards recognizing Jesus' deity) before moving on to discuss the distinct features of each Gospel (which coincidentally seems heavily slanted towards recognizing Jesus' humanity). Likewise, he devotes a chapter to the common Christological and soteriological themes (which are quite often connected) that run throughout the Pauline corpus before going on to examine the books individually in subsequent chapters.

Warrington is an incredibly clear writer and has a way of summarizing vast amounts of data into concise units that are quite easy to work through (I finished the book in a day and a half). It also helps that from the onset the reader knows that Warrington assumes the full deity and full humanity of Christ so that these features are merely presented rather than argued for throughout the course of the book. This isn't to say that one can't see how or why he interprets the data the way he does—this much is evident from his presentation—but the pages of this book are not occupied with extended exegetical arguments in support of Warrington's position, although there are regular references to Greek words or phrases with the occasional nod to grammatical matters thrown in for good measure (e.g., the tense of certain verbs are often highlighted to make a particular point about something that Jesus does or something we do in response to Jesus).

The positive features of this book are legion but it's not without fault. In particular I took issue with the early parts of his chapter on John which could have benefited from a bit more precision in the language he used. For example, he says things like: "Jesus was not born in time; he was alive before time was created" and "Jesus was not created; he is the one through whom everything was created." (45) Technically, "Jesus" was in fact "born in time" since the Incarnation is an historical event that took place in space and time. And technically "Jesus" is not "the one through whom everything was created" since creation occurred prior to the Word's Incarnation. In other words, "Jesus" wasn't "Jesus" until the Word became flesh.

Another deficiency, in my opinion, arises at various junctures in the book where Warrington makes reference to Jesus being *separated* from the Father on the cross (see e.g., pp. 30; 71; 103; 110). While this is standard fare for advocates of the penal substitutionary theory of atonement, it undermines the very oneness and unity that he seeks to present throughout his work! There's also the issue of anachronism in certain instances, specifically Warrington's handling of subordination texts in Paul. When he comes to subordination passages he smoothes them over with appeals to the passages referring solely to the Son's salvific mission (see e.g., p. 92). He's adamant that Father/Son language doesn't denote subordination but "[r]ather, the terminology speaks of relationship, rapport, bond, and affiliation between the Father and the Son—and not superiority and inferiority." (99-100) But one wonders whether Warrington's position on these passages reflects more modern concerns than those of Paul.

The back matter contains a 3 page bibliography, a 2½ page subject index, and an 11½ page index of ancient texts which would have been exponentially longer had Warrington included the Scripture references listed in the footnotes which easily number in the thousands. There is so many that even with powerful Bible software like BibleWorks and Logos I was not able to run them all down in a timely manner. At a certain point I decided to give up on even trying. But with all this in mind I have no problem saying that *Discovering Jesus in the New Testament* is a welcome addition to my library and I believe it would make a welcome addition to the library of any non-specialist interested in NT Christology, especially those who appreciate orthodox/traditional presentations of the subject.