

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

Boers, Hendrikus. <i>Christ in the Letters of Paul</i> (Michael Sokupa).....	91–94
Day, David. <i>Preaching with All You've Got: Embodying the Word</i> (Kenneth D. Mulzac).....	94–96
Dever, William G. <i>Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?</i> (Simon Bwambale)	96–99
Lupieri, Edmondo F. <i>A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John</i> (Richard A. Sabuin).....	99–102
Radner, Karen. <i>Die Macht des Namens: Altorientalische Strategien zur Selbsterhaltung</i> (Gerald A. Klingbeil)	102–105

Christ in the Letters of Paul: In Place of a Christology, by Hendrikus Boers. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006. Pp. xii + 361. ISBN 978-3-11-018992-6. US\$ 132.30.

Hendrikus Boers is professor emeritus in New Testament at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, USA. Boers dedicates this volume to Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998), who was his mentor in his initial search for the meaning of Christ in Paul (p. 1). In this book Boers embarks on a fresh approach to Pauline Christology that departs from Käsemann's (p. 2). He aims at assessing Paul's own formulations of his thoughts on what Christ meant for him rather than scholarly christological constructs. He approaches the task on two levels: on the first level he offers a reading of the meaning of Christ in Paul from the Pauline epistles themselves; on the second level he interacts with scholarly debates and contributions in the footnotes and excurses to keep the tension between his findings and the available literature that debates such issues (p. vi).

Boers does not define his method clearly. Developing a methodology may take a great deal of space, especially when one has to justify it among the existing ones, but it is necessary for proper orientation on a subject like this. Methodological references surface towards the end of the book without any prior orientation (pp. 217, 262, 298). Boers' methodology (p. 108) leans heavily on semantic analysis almost to the exclusion of grammatical and syntactical considerations. He seems to drive a wedge between his former work ("A Context for Interpreting Paul," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts. Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman* [edited by Tord Fornberg and David Helholm; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995], 429–53) and the current volume (p. 2). In the former his main methodological consideration was lexical-syntactic analysis, whereas in the latter he focuses exclusively on the semantic approach. His

approach, together with other similar approaches, has been criticized by Erickson (cf. Richard John Erickson "Biblical Semantics, Semantic Structure and Biblical Lexicology, A Study of Methods with Special Reference to the Pauline Lexical Field of 'Cognition'" [Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980], 121) who emphasizes the importance of paying attention to grammatical and syntactical analysis by a biblical interpreter who uses a semantic or linguistic approach to biblical interpretation.

The book is divided into two parts, with Part 1 focusing on the meaning of Christ for Paul personally and Part 2 concentrating on the meaning of Christ for the believer. According to Boers, Paul experienced Christ as a real being not from or through a theological construct (p. 3). Boers' thesis is that Paul's statements on Christ do not come from a central pool of ideas about Christ. He acknowledges that Paul does use traditional material occasionally, but when he does so, he is not teaching about Christ *per se* but Christ permeates his thoughts in a specific context. This is his main finding that he develops by appealing to passages in Pauline writings for evidence (p. 1). Boers views and examines each Pauline passage as expressing a unique momentary experience of Christ or as an expression of a past experience of Christ in a new context. For his methodology, Boers attempts to avoid any theological construct that may be superimposed on the text (p. 2). His intention to focus on the text is highly commendable. However, his selection of passages from the Pauline corpus for the purpose of advancing his arguments is not exhaustive; hence his conclusions may be considered rather weak in some instances.

There are three excurses in Part 1 that deal with the interpretation of specific passages from different Pauline epistles (pp. 26–30; 36–46; 74–98). For example, he views the argument in Gal 2:19, 20 as moving along the same lines as Phil 3:7–11. In both passages Paul appeals to Christ's appearance to him. There is also a lengthy discussion on Romans 7:7–18a; 24–25, that is not directly related to the subject at hand, but makes interesting reading (pp. 36–46).

Boers isolates three passages from 2 Corinthians that deal with the meaning of Christ for Paul (pp. 58–67). The author's contention is that two of these passages (2 Cor 13:3–5; 4:7–14) are for the purpose of expounding on Paul's own tribulations using the background of Christ's death and resurrection. On the other hand, 2 Cor 1:8–11 deals with Paul's confrontation with personal adversities. With these observations, Boers needs to be commended for not being satisfied with a surface reading and for carefully examining each passage at a semantic level.

Part 1 concludes with a comprehensive summary. Two grammatical errors and one spelling error in the summary sections do not reflect well on the editing of this work (pp. 101, 103 and 313).

Part 2 clusters some passages selected from 1 Corinthians and Galatians. At the center of the discussion is the meaning of Christ for the believer. The first cluster of passages reflects on Paul's earlier preaching. For example, Boers claims that in 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul does not make his presentation of 'Christ crucified' a foundation of his reasoning, although it is foundational for his preaching, because "Christ reemerges explicitly for the first time again in 4:10" (p. 109). In this instance it may seem that Boers misses Paul's flow of argumentation because his focus is on explicit references about Christ. For example, in the same passage Paul uses metaphoric language and personifies wisdom (cf. v. 7) and continues to argue along this line referring to Christ as wisdom. According to Boers, in each of these passages Paul's earlier preaching of Christ takes on a new meaning, with the exception of Gal 3:1-5 where the focus is on the Galatians as recipients of the preaching through which they encountered Christ. But Paul uses this as the foundation for his reasoning in verses 2-5. In Gal 3:1-5 and 1 Cor 15:1-19 Boers mentions three levels of the meaning of Christ without further elaboration. In a second cluster of passages (pp. 174-93) he finds a passage that has five levels of the meaning of Christ (namely 1 Thess 5:1-11), and in the third cluster (pp. 203-312) he observes that there is a passage that has four levels of meaning (1 Thess 1:6-10). This is where the approach begins to be more complex. Boers proposes that the five levels in 1 Thessalonians may function as a grammar with which the levels of the meaning of Christ in other passages may be examined (p. 318). The levels of meaning that Boers discovers are not explicit in the text; rather they seem to be an attempt to find some system. Boers finds himself trapped in the same problem that he sought to avoid at the beginning of the book. There is no consistent pattern that spells out why there are three levels in some texts and five in others. Boers does not explain clearly why he chooses 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 as a grammar for the other passages. These inconsistencies point back to the weak methodological foundation of the book. Part two ends with a summary of twelve pages. There is an extensive use of the Greek text throughout the book, but there is no reference given for the Greek text in the bibliography or any part of the book.

In spite of the flaws that have been identified, Boers' approach to Pauline Christology has again highlighted the need for a focused reading of the text and its literary context. Notwithstanding the weak methodological foundation, Boers' work will attract the interest of biblical scholars and New Testament students who have an interest in the Pauline epistles. Another area that the author does not address adequately is that of the dis-

puted Pauline writings. The extensive excursions that Boers provides could certainly have accommodated brief sections from the disputed Pauline epistles that are relevant to the subject.

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Preaching with All You've Got: Embodying the Word, by David Day. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005. Pp. vi + 186. ISBN 1-59856-029-8. US \$16.95.

David Day, former Principal of St. John's College with Cranmer Hall, Durham, England, is author of *Pearl Beyond Price* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), *Christ Our Life* (London: Church House, 2003) and *A Preaching Workbook* (London: SPCK, 2004).

The introductory chapter of this book underlines its overarching inquiry, "In what different ways can preachers embody the Word" (p. 2)? To this end, the author promotes a variety of ways that take into account the preacher's personality and words, as well as pictures and objects, the literary and dramatic arts, and the congregations' responses. In dealing with these, he divides the book in four parts. The first, "The Word Embodied in the Preacher," contends into four chapters that, while others may disassociate themselves from their jobs, this is not the case with the preacher. His or her total life is involved in the preaching task and the issues of "personal integrity, authenticity, holiness and transparency" (pp. 8–9). In a real way, the preacher's person is the message and must distinctively envelop: (1) fire and passion, which is empowered by the Spirit; (2) stillness and silence, quietly listening to God; and (3) love and compassion for the congregation.

The preacher must be vigilantly attentive to the distinction between "real character (i.e. the preacher in the presence of God) and the preacher's perceived character (i.e. the preacher as perceived by the congregation—its assessment of his or her character" (p. 20). This will help immensely with self-disclosure, which requires forethought and deliberation, realness as opposed to masking, and points to the preacher's humanity and vulnerability.

Day believes that for preaching to be attractive the preacher must view Scripture imaginatively. He should "live" the story by contemplating the different scenes, joining the conversation, shooting the narrative as a film, and attending to one's senses as one interacts with the story. With this accomplished the preacher can then give weight to the sermonic idea by way of repetition, paraphrase and expansion. Day reaches into his experience in public speaking, denoting several techniques from that discipline to make preaching alive using: the active versus the passive voice; direct speech;