

Book Reviews

Thomas Schreiner. *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification: What the Reformers Taught ... and Why It Still Matters*. The Five Solas Series. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015. Pp. 288.

The year 2017, five hundred years from what is often considered to be the start of the Reformation, provides an opportunity to reflect on the tenets of the Reformation anew. But what was distinctive about the Reformation, and do the pillars of the Reformation still stand after five hundred years? Enter a new series of books on the five *solas* of the Reformation, edited by Matthew Barrett. The first contribution to this series, from seasoned New Testament scholar Thomas R. Schreiner, defends biblically the doctrine of justification through the lens of “faith alone.” This is a particularly relevant topic, since the doctrine of justification by faith alone has continued to be questioned from various directions since the Reformation. This volume is not overly technical, but provides an overview of key issues, which lands at strategic points to provide more detailed investigation.

Following a foreword by John Piper, Schreiner’s contribution comprises three parts. Part 1 provides a historical overview of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Schreiner helpfully begins (ch. 1) with the early church and argues that, although the doctrine of justification by faith alone was not as clear as we may like it to be, we do find evidence of justification by faith alone in several church fathers, beginning with the apostolic fathers; among others, he discusses here Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to Diognetus*, the *Odes of Solomon*, and Justin Martyr. He also discusses the views of Augustine on justification, which may not be quite as close to the Reformational view as some might wish. He then devotes four chapters to proponents of *sola fide* in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods:

Martin Luther (ch. 2), John Calvin (ch. 3), John Owen and Francis Turretin (along with Richard Baxter, ch. 5), and Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (ch. 6). Chapter 4 deals with the Council of Trent's response to *sola fide*. Schreiner argues, not surprisingly, that Luther and Calvin are both strong proponents of *sola fide*. Similarly, Schreiner finds *sola fide* emphasized in Owen and Turretin, along with the related doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness (though he finds Baxter's position on justification to be wanting). Schreiner also argues that Edwards and Wesley ultimately held to *sola fide* for justification, though he admits their language can be confusing and perhaps not always consistent. Concerning Trent, Schreiner laments the anathemas pronounced on those who believe in faith alone for justification, and discusses whether or not they have in any way been rescinded.

In part 2, which is the longest portion of the book, Schreiner turns his attention in ten chapters to exegesis, especially (but not only) of Pauline texts. These include human sin (ch. 7), faith alone (ch. 8), faith in Jesus Christ (ch. 9), the importance of justification in Paul (ch. 10), righteousness in relation to justification (chs. 11–15), and good works and justification (ch. 16). Among other things, Schreiner argues that "works of the law" in Paul refers to the whole law and is not limited to boundary markers. For Paul, perfect obedience is required for justification, and the problem of sin means that no one (apart from Jesus) is able to meet this demand. He further argues that the righteousness of God prominently includes God's saving righteousness, but cannot be reduced only to his covenant faithfulness. Justification is not a process of being made righteous, but is a forensic declaration of a righteous status (entailing the imputation of righteousness), that is not based upon the believer's good works.

Part 3 then briefly considers some challenges to *sola fide* in recent years, focusing primarily on Roman Catholic theology (chs. 17–18) and the New Perspective on Paul, represented in the writings of N. T. Wright (chs. 19–20). In chapters 17–18 Schreiner outlines and critiques efforts of Roman Catholics and Protestants over the past twenty-plus years to paper over differences relating to justification, since the fissures between Rome and the Reformation remain significant and deep. Though Schreiner addresses the New Perspective on Paul throughout the volume, chapters 19–20 provide dedicated engagement with the arguments of N. T. Wright, for whom he expresses his appreciation. However, he remains ultimately unpersuaded by some of Wright's distinctive emphases pertaining to justification.

There is much to appreciate in Schreiner's treatment of justification. As one has come to expect from Schreiner, his discussions are fair, his style is easy to follow, and his conclusions are consistently sound. For example,

Schreiner acknowledges the necessity of good works for salvation, even as he maintains a distinction between the basis of justification (Christ's righteousness alone) and the evidences of justification (the good works of the believer). Such care with terminology is to be applauded, since one does not often find this level of consistency and nuance in all writings on Paul's doctrine of justification. Schreiner also makes a strong case for the objective genitive reading of *pistis Christou* (and related phrases), referring to *faith in* Christ (rather than the *faithfulness of* Christ). There is also quite a bit in this volume that supports the imputation of Christ's righteousness as a concomitant of *sola fide*.

The style and tone of the book make it accessible to readers of various levels. I envision this will be an especially helpful work for pastors and students seeking an overview of issues such as the righteousness of God, along with some clarity in how to respond to the New Perspective on Paul. Moreover, it is immensely refreshing to find a work of New Testament scholarship addressing not only exegetical matters, but also important works from the history of interpretation. As it has been noted in another context, often the best arguments in the history of interpretation have never been refuted; they have been simply ignored or forgotten. The arguments of Owen and Turretin, for example, have often not been engaged sufficiently by New Testament scholarship, but at points (including issues pertaining to justification) their arguments would need to be refuted for newer formulations to be compelling to those familiar with the church's rich traditions. Schreiner's interaction with these Reformed stalwarts, along with his capable biblical exegesis, reinforces the hesitancy we should have to embrace redefinitions of justification.

In sum, Schreiner has demonstrated that there is ample, biblical reason to hold steadfastly to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, despite questions that have been raised about this doctrine over the years. This is a fine resource that has set the bar high for this new series on the five *solas* of the Reformation.

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Scott H. Hendrix. *Martin Luther: Visionary Reformer*. New Haven: Yale, 2015.

This book should rightfully take its place as the new standard biography of Martin Luther. Scott Hendrix—Professor Emeritus of Reformation History, Princeton Theological Seminary—has integrated the best of recent Luther