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Harris, Johnathan F.: Christ-faith and Abraham in Galatians 3–4. Paul's Tale of Two Siblings. – Leiden: Brill 2023. 300 S. (Biblical Interpretation Series, 214), geb. € 139,10 ISBN: 978-90-04-68095-1

Johnathan F. Harris' volume is a very detailed work centered on a theol. conundrum pertaining to how one should understand the expression πίστις Χριστοῦ (i. e., "faith in/of Christ"). H. is a Visiting Assistant Prof. of Biblical and Religious Studies at Samford Univ. in Birmingham, Alabama. This vol. is a revised version of his dissertation completed at Wheaton College.

The heart of the volume is divided into two parts. part one "(chap.s 1–3) establishes a revisionist reading of Paul's thesis from which a rereading of Abraham can proceed." (4) This is followed by part two (chap.s 4–6) which "pursues a christological rereading of Abraham in Galatians 3:1–5:1." (5) In turn, this is followed by the Conclusion and an Appendix that addresses the implications of the study on Galatians as it pertains to Romans.

An explicit thesis of this volume is first stated clearly on page four in the introduction (and restated on page 46), when H. writes "this book aims to offer an interpretation of Paul's reading and use of the Abraham narrative in Galatians that functions coherently with a revised interpretation of πίστις Χριστοῦ." This is primarily accomplished through offering a "third view", a "revisionist reading" interpretation of πίστις Χριστοῦ (translated as "Christ-faith") where the phrase is understood as an eschatological event in time and space. Of equal importance to this thesis, H. also offers two additional critical components. In addition to the "Christ-faith", H. is arguing (1.) that Paul is making a coherent argument centered on the Abraham narratives of Genesis throughout Galatians 3–4, and (2.) the allegory of 4:21–5:1 is an "integrated" final component to Paul's ability to present two contrasting realms in a symbolic world where the Christ-event has reshaped the cosmos in both time and space. A summation of the chap.s is as follows (226–229).

Chap. one "argues for the strength of the third view, which follows Benjamin Schliesser in understanding πίστις Χριστοῦ with reference to the Christ-event and the eschatological inbreaking of the age of faith." (4–5) The "enigmatic phrase" (9) πίστις Χριστοῦ has troubled exegetes for centuries centering on whether the "traditional" objective genitive interpretation, "faith *in* Jesus Christ", is correct, or the alternative subjective genitive "the faith/faithfulness *of* Jesus Christ." After providing a definition of terms, H. presents a brief history of interpretation of the phrase beginning in 1891, while commenting on a number of advancements and perspectives that have developed all the way up to Nicholas Thomas Wright's *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis 2013). From this launching point, H. explains how he will approach his understanding of faith of Christ, namely, through a third view where he understands it as the eschatological Christ event. Here, H. is able to

present his major contribution to this field of inquiry. Up to this point, a revisionist, third-view understanding of the expression πίστις Χριστοῦ has not fully explained the role of Abraham and the process of salvation within the argumentation of Paul in Galatians 3–4 that incorporates the allegory of 4:21–5:1. H. seeks a coherence of Paul’s argumentation throughout Galatians.

H. continues to lay the groundwork for his argument in chap. two. Thus chap. two focuses upon several key expressions and preliminary assumptions about Galatians (e. g., the theol. situation of the Galatians, the meaning of ἔργα νόμου [translated by H. as “Torah-works”], etc.). In this case, H. will draw attention, in similar fashion to Martinus C. De Boer, to the cosmic implications of two contrasting systems (“competing spheres”, 60) between “Christ-faith” and “Torah-works”. In other words, H. will emphasize the failure of the Torah to bring about justification by God, while giving special attention to a close analysis of the various adverbial phrases that lend support to this argument.

In chap. two, H. argued for understanding “Torah-works” in contrast to “Christ-faith” as the “two ‘spheres of instrumentality’ through which God may be alleged to have justified his people.” (64) Thus, there is a need for chap. three: “Justified” where H. will argue that “Paul’s justification statements function as metaphors through which Paul recalls Israel’s prophetic tradition, where the language was used to refer to Israel’s deliverance from foreign oppression.” (108–109)

Now that H. has laid the groundwork in part one for understanding the revisionist perspective on πίστις Χριστοῦ and how God “justifies” the believer in contrast to the ἔργα νόμου, attention in part two will focus specifically upon understanding how the Abraham narratives of Genesis fit into this framework of understanding. Thus, chap. four will focus on interpreting Genesis 15:6. In short, H. argues that Paul understands this passage to be specifically pointing his readers/hearers to think of the birth of Isaac. “In other words, in Paul’s reading of Gen 15:6, Isaac is Abraham’s righteousness” (137). This explanation allows for a logical sequencing that will lead the readers from Paul’s discussion regarding the manifestation of the Spirit (3:5) to righteousness (3:6) to children (3:7). The point for H. is to demonstrate a continuity of thought centered upon Abraham and his offspring ranging throughout Galatians three through four. This centering analysis of Genesis 15:6 in chap. four, penultimately moves the reader through chap. five, where H. uses the material of Galatians 3:1–4:11 to demonstrate Paul’s contrasting symbolic worlds of “Torah-works” on the one hand and “Christ-faith” on the other (192).

In detailed, exegetical fashion, chap. five: “The Best of Times, the Worst of Times”, provides a close hermeneutical interpretation that links us from Galatians 3:5 to 4:21.

An interpretation of Galatians 4:21–5:1 is the primary focus of chap. six. In particular, H. is making clear that this allegory is not “ad hoc” or “extemporaneous interpretation” from Paul, but is rather a culmination of Paul’s thought beginning with his discussion of Abraham in 3:5, and coming to a climax and capstone for Paul’s argument about the two children representing two spheres (192–194). A careful consideration of the allegory’s place in the argumentation, the character, and the purpose of it are thoughtfully considered. This is followed by an exegetical study of the passage, with an extended analysis of Isaiah 54:1, that leads to H.’ emphasizing of three implications of Paul relaying this story: Isaac is to be associated with the ideas of Promise, Spirit, and Freedom. By contrast, “[b]y citing Gen 21:10, Paul urges the Galatians to cast out Torah itself (i. e., ἡ παιδίσκη) by rejecting the rival teachers’ Torah-oriented message and way of life ...” (221). In contrast to the embrace of promise, Spirit, and freedom, the opposite sphere to be rejected in Ishmael is essentially flesh, Torah, and slavery.

Overall, H. has provided a convincing reading of Galatians that does effectively connect Gal 4:21–5:1 back to a flow of argumentation going back to Gal 3:5. There are a few areas that were difficult to accept. One important matter pertains to the relationship of H.’ overall argument to the *New Perspective on Paul*, and some of the more recent discussion related to *Paul Within Judaism*. While there are always limits to what one can address in a monograph, subsequent and critical issues needing to be addressed would pertain to how H. would integrate some of his thoughts into the socio-cultural worldview of a first century Jew such as the apostle Paul. In short, on too many occasions, H. doesn’t adequately explain what it means for Paul to “reject” Torah or circumcision. To keep this discussion strictly to Galatians, no explanation is offered as to why Paul would also demonstrate an uncommitted opinion about circumcision on two occasions (Gal 5:6 and 6:15). In fact, neither of these two passages are even cited in the work! Further thoughts and clarifications on this point, I hope will be forthcoming as it appears that further work, as demonstrated by the appendix on Romans, is most certainly on the table for H. Nevertheless, in sum, the work is a careful and worthy theol. reading of Galatians.

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