

background against which to interpret the wisdom motif in the NT, his study offers information that, for instance, could eventually shed new light on such concepts as the identification of Jesus as the wisdom of God or the sharp contrast between flesh and spirit attested in Paul's writings (28-34).

Kampen's *Wisdom Literature* makes a valuable contribution to the study of the DSS, and deserves careful consideration by all those, specialists or not, who wish to gain new insights into this important body of Jewish literature.

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Paul Martens. *The Heterodox Yoder*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012.

Paul Martens concludes *The Heterodox Yoder* by asserting that the object of his study was indeed "heterodox" (144). Martens has his work cut out for him as he seeks to substantiate such a surprising judgment. What is the "orthodoxy" against which Yoder's theology is to be measured? As the author admits, labeling something as "heterodox" as opposed to "orthodox" begs for the definition of orthodoxy. Indeed. But he expresses reluctance to get his "toes wet in this debate." He ends up with a simple definition: "My criterion is the Christian affirmation of the particularity or uniqueness of Jesus Christ as a historical person and as a revelation of God" (2). This definition does not apply to Yoder?

Martens begs his readers' patience: "Read my argument through to the end before rendering judgment" (2). He implies a promise here: Stay with me and I will carefully and clearly explain why I am making this charge that may seem absurd to you. It is on the fulfillment of this promise that *The Heterodox Yoder* should be judged.

The heart of the book, chapters two through five, offers a roughly chronological survey of Yoder's theological evolution. These chapters provide a valuable account of Yoder's development that begins in the early 1950s and concludes with the projects he engaged towards the end of his life in 1997.

Martens makes a distinctive contribution to our sense of the evolution of Yoder's theology. However, the analysis of Yoder's work specifically in relation to the book's central question (Was Yoder orthodox?) is surprisingly muted. In these chapters the author hardly addresses the orthodoxy question.

In the end, Martens fails to make the case that Yoder was heterodox. However, what undermines the book is not this failure. A *careful* argument that Yoder was heterodox could still be instructive, even if finally unpersuasive. The problem with *The Heterodox Yoder* is that the author does not provide bases for a constructive conversation. In the end, there are three important elements of such a conversation that he does not engage. First, although he gives a definition of "orthodoxy" presumably to govern his analysis of Yoder's thought, he is vague about what he means by the term. And he does not return to his criterion of orthodox christology as an ongoing, stable basis for evaluation as he goes through Yoder's thought. He does not even return to his criterion of orthodoxy in the conclusion as he asserts Yoder's heterodoxy.

A second major lack is the author's failure to engage Yoder on the level of biblical interpretation. His critique seems to be that Yoder reduces theology to (neo-Kantian) ethics, that Yoder in the end is a modernist. The big problem here is that Yoder always presented his thought as being biblically based; his notions of ethics and politics were not intended to echo modernist views but to be distinctively biblical. If one is going to critique Yoder as Martens does, one cannot ignore Yoder's interpretations of the Bible. One would have to *show* where Yoder goes wrong. To say he is heterodox because he over-emphasizes politics and ethics is unfair, unless one is willing to show that Yoder departs from biblical teaching. Linked with this failure is that Martens does not engage Yoder's privileging the Bible over the later creeds that Yoder also nonetheless affirms. Martens implies that his criterion of orthodoxy rests on creedal definitions of the identity of Jesus Christ. Perhaps Yoder's definition of the identity of Christ is different. If so, it is because Yoder places the priority on the biblical portrayal of Jesus. This is a crucial issue, largely ignored by Martens.

Finally, the third theme required for a useful conversation that doesn't happen is a sense of Martens's own constructive concerns. The book reads like an effort at debunking rather than as part of a bigger project in constructive

theology. The author's silence about his own positive vision makes it difficult to converse with his critique. How does Martens think we should affirm Jesus Christ's humanity and divinity in ways that speak to the lives we are living in this world? A sense of his viewpoint would provide a much-needed perspective on his critique.

Yoder's theology remains an invitation for conversation. We should be happy that Martens has joined this conversation – and hope for a more substantive contribution in the future, should he seek to sustain his critique of Yoder's orthodoxy.

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