

Echevarría, Miguel G., and Benjamin P. Laird. *40 Questions about the Apostle Paul*. 40 Questions Series. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023. 306pp. + 13pp. (back matter).

Miguel G. Echevarría is an associate professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has written books on the Pauline and Johannine Epistles. He holds a PhD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary. Benjamin P. Laird is an associate professor of biblical studies at the John Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University. He holds a PhD from the University of Aberdeen and a ThM and MDiv from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has written several books on the NT canon.

Unlike other books in this series (such as *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*), the articles are not attributed directly to one of the co-authors; therefore, it is impossible to determine what each author would affirm. The questions are grouped into three sections.

The first section contains eleven questions concerning the apostle Paul's pre-Christian and Christian life. Questions in this section address where Paul was born and raised, what we know about his family, his education, his motivation to destroy the church, his early years of ministry, his first missionary journey, his second and third missionary journeys, his final years of life, his death, his missionary strategy, and his primary opponents.

The second section consists of twelve questions about the writing and authority of Paul's letters. Questions address when and where Paul wrote his letters, whether Paul's companions assisted in the writing and distribution of his letters, whether Paul's letters resembled the style and structure of contemporary letters, when and how Paul's writings were first collected and published, whether Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews, what happened to Paul's lost letters, why some scholars question the authenticity of certain Pauline canonical letters, what the basis is for affirming the authenticity of disputed Pauline letters, whether Paul thought his letters were Scripture, why Peter said some of Paul's writings were "hard to understand," what sources Paul used, and how Paul used the OT.

The third section consists of seventeen questions about Paul's theology. The first question in this section addresses whether there is a center to Paul's theology. Others address his Christology, his view of atonement, conversion, baptism, the Lord's Supper, his understanding of the relationship between the law and the gospel, the role of faith and works in salvation, his eschatology, the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), the strengths and weaknesses of the NPP, whether *pistis Christou* should be translated as "faith in Christ" or "faithfulness of Christ," Paul's view regarding marriage, singleness and divorce, his teaching regarding the role of women in the home and church, whether Paul taught that some spiritual gifts would cease, his teachings about slavery and racial divisions, and whether Paul believed that the church replaced Israel.

Several chapters in this book are very helpful. The chapters on Paul's books and background are excellent resources that could be easily integrated into a NT survey course. The reflection questions for each chapter are helpful as well. The first three questions about where Paul was born and raised, what we know about Paul's family, and what we know about Paul's education are particularly valuable.

The book's best chapters are the two chapters about the New Perspective on Paul and the meaning of *pistis Christou*. In particular, the chapter on the strengths and weaknesses of the New Perspective on Paul articulates these clearly. The strengths of the NPP include its emphasis on Second Temple literature, a positive portrayal of Judaism, and the interpretation of Paul within his Jewish context. The weaknesses of the NPP include its strict assumptions about Jewish soteriology, its overemphasis on the role of covenant in Pauline thought, and its mishandling of the works of the law. The chapter on *pistis Christou* does an excellent job of contrasting the arguments for the objective (faith in Christ) and subjective genitives (faithfulness of Christ). The authors helpfully show that the arguments are not definitive and that good conservative scholars are on both sides of the issue.

The only major problem with the book was the last chapter about whether the church has replaced Israel. The authors do not believe that the church has replaced Israel (302) but argue for an over-realized continuity between the church and Israel (302–4). The chapter draws a firm conclusion without providing adequate evidence. The authors' strongest argument is the idea of the nations' being blessed through the promises of Abraham (Gen 12:3; 15:6; Rom 4:11–12; Gal 3:7–9). The authors evaluate the meaning of the phrase “and . . . the Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16 and argue that the best sense of *καί* would be “that is” rather than a connective “and” (304–5), but this is the *least* grammatically likely of the available options. The authors claim that since there is no distinction in the body of Christ elsewhere in Galatians, there can be none here. In the opinion of this reviewer, their conclusion does not entail from the evidence. Many people who accept a distinction between the church and Israel, such as dispensationalists, acknowledge that there is no distinction in the church. The authors provide a footnote to Craig Keener's Galatians commentary for further options, but they draw definitive conclusions that are inadequately warranted. Regardless of the theological position of this reader, he will want to see a more adequate explanation of this issue.

The book's wealth of information and insightful analysis make it a worthwhile addition to any library—accessible to readers at all levels of study.

Joel Thomas

PhD Candidate | Capital Seminary