

Review: Biblical Reasoning

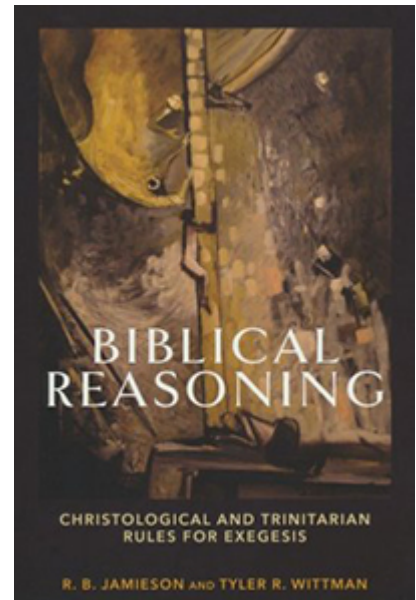
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Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis

By R.B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman

Authors R.B. Jamieson and Tyler R. Wittman focus on twin truths of Scripture—God is one in three, and Christ is fully divine and fully human—to develop a series of guiding principles and useful rules for proper biblical interpretation. In doing so, they provide a practical toolkit for rightly reading Scripture (which, incidentally, would have made a more approachable subtitle than the dry-as-dust one on the book cover).

As a foundational principle, Jamieson and Wittman begin with this statement: “Holy Scripture presupposes and fosters readers whose end is the vision of Christ’s glory, and therein eternal life. Biblical reasoning must be ordered to this same end” (p. 3). From that starting point, the authors identify six additional principles with which few—if any—historically orthodox Christians could disagree. Based on those seven principles, they present 10 helpful rules to guide the reading and interpretation of Scripture. Along the way, they illustrate the principles and rules as they exegete specific biblical passages.



Nine pages of biblical references in the index demonstrate the degree to

which *Biblical Reasoning* is grounded in Holy Scripture. While the authors mention some modern theologians and biblical scholars, they lean heavily toward ancient and medieval sources such as Augustine, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Tertullian and Thomas Aquinas, among others.

Jamieson is associate pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., and Wittman is assistant professor of theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The book benefits from the complementary expertise the authors have in biblical studies and systematic theology, respectively.

Even so, readers are left to wonder if *Biblical Reasoning* might have been even stronger and more helpful if they had enlisted a co-author with a background in one other academic discipline—Christian ethics.

For example, one of the rules they cite is reading biblical depictions of God in a manner that is “fitting for God” or “worthy of God”—consistent with the overall biblical portrait of God. They properly apply the principle in understanding references to God that describe him in human terms. However, they neglect to tackle the thornier issue of troublesome Old Testament passages, such as God commanding the slaughter of the Canaanites—an action many find difficult to reconcile with the perfect picture of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

As carefully worded as their scholarly rules for biblical exegesis are, Jamieson and Wittman might have benefitted from citing one simple but profound sentence from the 1963 Baptist Faith & Message: “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.”

Ken Camp, managing editor

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