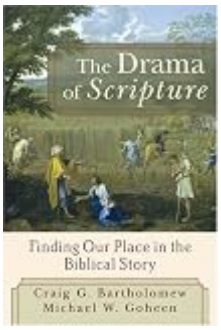
THE DRAMA OF SCRIPTURE

Posted on March 31, 2009 by Eddie

Category: Reviews

This morning I was listening to my friend Roger talking about teaching the Scriptures. He said that he tries very hard to convey the drama of Scripture so that his hearers will be excited about the message and will want to read it for themselves. As well as thinking that this was a very wise comment, I was also intrigued because I was planning a post with a short review ofÂ The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story by Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen.



Simply put, this book gives an overview of the Biblical story and seeks to show how we find our place in that story. In some ways it covers very similar ground as Vaughan Roberts God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-Line of the Bible, but I think that this book does a far better job. There are three things which I would highlight in this book. Firstly, it is fairly detailed: 250 pages including bibliography and notes. This means that it is able to go into some (but not a lot) of detail about the Biblical text. Secondly, the authors trace a continuity through the Bible in the themes of covenant and kingdom. The Bible is not just a set of random stories, but it is a narrative which is centred around God's interaction with humanity. Finally, this book stresses the way in which our lives must be shaped by the overarching narrative of the Bible, rather than us reading the Bible into the narrative of our lives.

A longish quote from page 196 captures these themes.

> *... The world of the Bible is our world, and its story of redemption is also our story. This story is waiting for an ending - in part because we ourselves have a role to play before all is concluded. We must therefore pay attention to the continuing biblical story of redemption. We must resist the temptation to read the Scriptures as if they were a religious flea market, wit a basket of history and old doctrines here, a shelf full of pious stories there, promises and commands scattered from one end to the other. Some readers of the Bible turn it into little more than an anthology of proof texts assembled to support a system of theology. Others seek only tehical guidance, ransacking the Old Testament for stories of moral instruction. Still others look just for inspirational or devotional messages, for comforting promises and lessons for dailiy living. The result may be that we lose sight of the Bible's essential unity and instead find only those theological, oral devotional or historical fragments we are looking for.*
>
> *But all human communities, including our own, live out of some comprehensive story that suggests the meaning and goal of history and that gives shape and direction to human life. We may neglect the biblical story. God's comprehensive account of the shape and direction of cosmic history and the meaning of all that he has done in the world. If we do so, the fragments of the Bible that we do preserve are in danger of being absorbed piecemeal into the dominant cultural story of our modern European and North American democracies. And*

> *the dominant story of modern culture is rooted in idolatry: an ultimate confidence in humanity to achieve its own salvation. Thus, instead of allowing the Bible to shape us, we may in fact be allowing our culture to shape the Bible for us. Our view of the world and even our faith will be moulded by one or the other: either the biblical story is our foundation, or the Bible itself becomes subsumed within the modern story of the secular Western world. If our lives are to be shaped and formed by Scripture, we need to know the biblical story well, to feel it in our bones. To do this, we must also know our place within it - where we are in the story.*

Good stuff. This is a book that you should read. If I hadn't read ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church recently, I would be saying that The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story was likely to be my best read of the year.

Antony Billington has an interesting review of this book which adds more background information and is worth a look at.