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Tarvainen's "Faith and love in Ignatius of Antioch" (book review)

Paul Hartog

Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary

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Book Reviews



Tarvainen, O. (2016). *Faith and love in Ignatius of Antioch*. (J. Lookadoo, Trans.) Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. 105 pp. \$18.00 ISBN 9781532601923

Sometimes the old becomes new again. Jonathon Lookadoo, who has recently completed a PhD at the University of Otago, has newly introduced a fifty-year-old German work to Anglophone readers. The study, originally composed by Olavi Tarvainen, was first published as *Glaube und Liebe bei Ignatius von Antiochien* (1967). So what makes Tarvainen's small volume worthy of translation and re-publication? "To my knowledge," explains Lookadoo, "Tarvainen's study remains the only stand-alone treatment of faith and love in Ignatius of Antioch, and it uses this potent juxtaposition of terms as a lens through which to view Ignatius's thought holistically, yielding an intriguing, exciting, and largely compelling picture of Ignatius's theology" (p. x).

Tarvainen's work should be read in tandem with chapter four ("Faith and Love") of Gregory Vall's recent monograph *Learning Christ: Ignatius of Antioch and the mystery of Redemption* (CUA Press, 2013). Tarvainen demonstrates that Ignatius's moral theology can be characterized as a Christocentric "ethics of love" (p. 85). Moreover, the themes of "faith" and "love" are not only central to Ignatian thought, they also transcend his historical context and "give direction for the future" (p. xxvii). This is not to say that Ignatius's theology is above critique, as he did not sufficiently incorporate the topic of "hope" (pp. 4, 29), which is embedded within the Pauline triad of the cardinal virtues ("faith, hope, and love").

The fifty-year publication gap of this translated work results in some signs of aging, since Tarvainen was unable to consider contemporary scholarship on the authenticity and dating of the Ignatian corpus, the identification of the Ignatian opponents, the Ignatian understanding of "mono-episcopacy," and the "restoration of peace" in the Antiochene church. The footnotes and the bibliography especially reflect the dated nature of the scholarly interaction. For the most part, however, Lookadoo's new translation is lucid and engaging, although one finds a few missteps (pp. xxiii n.1, 39). In several cases, a differing English vocabulary-choice might have avoided unnecessary confusion (pp. 18, 37, 62, 81). In a few instances, a mere rearrangement of wording would have aided readability (pp. 39, 52). Unfortunately, minor typos appear throughout the work (pp. xiv, xvi, xvii n.29, xviii, 23 n.30, 24, 28 n.47, 40, 40 n.62, 43, 50, 59, 68 n.32, 71, 77, 78, 88, 96).

Nevertheless, Lookadoo has granted a literary gift to English-speaking readers. He has done a great service to students of both the Ignatian corpus and the early *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of New Testament themes. This short volume provides an illuminating window into the theological ethics of an important Apostolic Father, as well as early Christian intertextuality. According to Tarvainen, Ignatius manifests “points of contact” with both Johannine and Pauline notions (p. 75), as well as “the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount” (pp. 53, 80). Through an emphasis upon “a faith working through love,” Ignatius emerges as “an extraordinarily multifaceted Christian, bishop, pneumatic, and martyr” (p. 89). Such an extraordinary portrait is indeed worthy of translation, re-publication, and purchase.

Reviewer

Paul Hartog, Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary