

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php

REVIEWS

The Recalcitrant Imago Dei: Human Persons and the Failure of Naturalism

J. P. Moreland

London: SCM Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-334-04215-0. xiii + 210pp. £40.00

Moreland's latest consolidates the criticisms of naturalism that he's developed over the last fifteen years, offering a sustained case against the prevailing philosophical worldview. His argument, in short, is this: Many naturalists acknowledge that *the* challenge for their view of the cosmos is to explain how we fit into it. But naturalism does not have room for us; it cannot account for obvious facts about persons. So, either we must deny the obvious – that we are conscious, free, rational, and inherently valuable entities – or we must abandon the theory according to which we lack these qualities. But if we abandon naturalism, and if our having these properties is more consonant with a theistic framework than any other, then we have good reason to be theists.

The book moves at fast clip. Moreland begins by describing the difficulties that face naturalistic accounts of the emergence of the mental from the non-mental, appealing primarily to Jaegwon Kim's exclusion argument and conceivability arguments. He then turns to the shortcomings of naturalistic theories of free will, rationality, teleology, and normativity, devoting considerable attention to John Searle's biological naturalism. He goes on to defend substance dualism and criticize constitution and hylo-morphic alternatives. Moreland also challenges evolutionary accounts of human moral behavior and champions J. L. Mackie's famous queerness argument to the effect that naturalism is incompatible with *sui generis* moral properties. The book ends with an appendix that takes on Thomas Nagel's recent attempt to legitimate the failure of naturalism to provide any explanation for our rationality and ability to understand the world.

The Recalcitrant Imago Dei systematically presents a series of important objections against naturalism, the joint force of which make it plain that the reigning philosophical orthodoxy cannot accommodate a host of facts that seem to be constitutive of what and who we are. Moreover, it is one the few books that correctly identifies the *imago dei* as the locus of those facts and develops a broadly biblical anthropology that makes sense of them.

Nevertheless, I can offer only a qualified recommendation of this book to the readership of *SBET*. There are two main problems. The first is that,

for those not already familiar with the debates on which Moreland is commenting, the text will be unnecessarily difficult to follow: Moreland tries to cover an enormous amount of material in 180 pages; consequently, he is unable to provide the reader much by way of introduction to the rather technical points at issue, and even less to orient the reader to the larger philosophical issues at stake. The second problem is that Moreland gives the reader the false impression that driving home the conflict between an appealing view of persons and naturalism is itself sufficient to make the case against naturalism. Although it's true that naturalism cannot accommodate the view of persons to which he's committed, that fact is not news (as Moreland himself repeatedly illustrates with quotes from prominent naturalists). The most challenging recent work in philosophical anthropology *questions* our justification for the appealing view of persons, and that is where the debate now lies. It is this conversation to which Christians must contribute if they are to fend off successfully the scientism that Moreland rightly decries.

In Moreland's defence, he was not out to write a tome containing all the requisite background material, and he undoubtedly thinks the commonsense view of persons has more warrant than do any of the arguments against it. Still, the above shortcomings are bound to limit the audience and the usefulness of this volume.

R. W. Fischer, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL USA

The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology

Alister E. McGrath

Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-4051-2691-5. 384pp. £23.99.

There resides a tension in Western Christianity that can be traced back at least as far as the Reformation. The tension concerns revelation. To describe this tension using the language faculty psychology, it amounts to the question of whether revelation's conduit is the intellect or the will. While the story is much more complicated, the models of revelation formed on these two approaches can be described, respectively, as the positions of grace and justification. The first necessitates a certain elevation of human intellect to the mystery *that* there is a God; the second presupposes only that God confronts and turns the human will.

To no small degree, Alister McGrath's book *The Open Secret* could at first very well be interpreted as an attempt to mediate these historical approaches to revelation. That is, McGrath claims to interpret nature in light of the Christ event. Accordingly, he seems fully to admit that the conduit of revelation is God's justifying work on human will. He claims this, how-

ever, while simultaneously admitting that this event provides a new way to read, even the best rational way to read, 'the book of nature': as reflective of—as saying something about—the Christian God. The syntheses promised in this book are both potent and needed.

These ideas are expanded through three skillfully developed sections, each containing a well developed argument. In the first section, McGrath shows the relationship between nature and mind, arguing forcefully that human mental categories are at least partially constitutive of 'nature', and that just such a position is itself 'natural'. Using this critical realist epistemology, McGrath rejects in the second section certain strands of Enlightenment naturalistic thought, strands that emphasize some *single* rational reading of the book of nature impressed, as it were, upon humanity's passive mind. Rather, nature's text is 'ambiguous', dependent on the value-structures and categories of the human reader. There is accordingly a penumbra of possible *readings* of nature, and McGrath argues in incarnational terms that the very best reading is that opened in the Christ event. The implications of this re-envisioned natural theology are drawn out in the third section where McGrath gives renewed meaning to the transcendentals. He argues that the concepts of truth, beauty, and goodness are reanimated in the Christian read of nature, thereby reestablishing, respectively, a sense of meaning, value, and goodness in and to the natural order. To his credit, McGrath also openly confronts difficult questions in these sections such as the question of natural evil in evolutionary developments.

Alas, at the end of the book, the question that remains for this reader is whether or not McGrath properly understood the nature of the mediation that he promised when he spoke originally of interpreting nature in light of the Christ event. As the point of revelation, such a promise must unfold within a robust christology. The christology McGrath develops, while dynamic, vibrant, and teeming with life, teems with the life of a transcendental Thomist and the intellectualist stance toward revelation such takes. In other words, Christ is not an event for McGrath in the sense intended by the likes of Jüngel—an act of justifying grace whereby the will is unexpectedly turned toward right relationship with God. Instead, like Rahner, Christ is more akin to the ontological meeting point of humanity, nature, and God in and through God's incarnate creation. This meeting point is first known through intellect, meaning McGrath falls squarely within the tradition of grace. Broken promises or false expectations aside, the book is both a good and valuable read.

Eric Hall, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA USA

Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo

Bruce Ellis Benson and Peter Goodwin Heltzel (eds)

Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-58743-235-4. 326pp. £14.99

Many of today's self-identifying evangelicals realise a desperate need to re-evaluate their support of the political status quo. *Evangelicals and Empire (EE)* represents one attempt to do just that; though with its diverse collection of authors the volume is perhaps best described as 'conversation-starter' rather than sustained argument. In fact, the title-word 'empire' is itself responding to conversations sparked by recent bestsellers *Empire* (Harvard, 2000) and *Multitude* (Penguin, 2004), where political theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri identify modern imperialism as (in the words of our editors) 'the global economic empire [that] belongs to everyone and no one' (p. 12). For Hardt and Negri, this signifies a shift *away* from emphasising nation-based imperial projects and toward confronting today's 'ever-strengthening power of free-market capitalism' (p. 12), the sheer quasi-personal force of which exacerbates economic inequalities and promotes elitist politics worldwide. *EE* is thus conceived in the stream of this provocative and controversial thesis. Its multiple contributors employ Hardt/Negri (non-evangelicals and non-Christians themselves) as a point of departure for examining ways in which evangelicalism may meet or fail the demand to resist oppressive politics and economics worldwide. Several points arise which merit our attention. In this review we shall limit ourselves to two general observations.

The first centres on the problematic term *evangelical*. Some authors object to the word, and not a few find its common association with white/conservative/American/Protestant as historically naïve and theologically pretentious. What troubles them most, however, is how few evangelicals (and the media that represent them) recognise the complexities implicit to it. So what is evangelicalism? It is not conservatism or orthodoxy, decries one interlocutor (p. 187). It is neither historically white (chs. 12, 14, 17), nor exclusively American (ch. 11), contend several others. And it should not be viewed as the only conceivable future for Christianity (chs. 13, 17). Confused over again by journalist and theologian alike – the renowned J.I. Packer is accused of 'pompously' defining evangelicalism by a strange sort of myopic historiography (p. 111) – the label 'evangelical' sustains as much pressure from these authors as the imperialism they seek to confront by it. Their reason is much more than semantics, too. Indeed for many scholars, the overtly facile definition of the word lies at the heart of evangelical collusion with power that they aim to protest.

Somewhat separate from these ventures, another group of scholars argues that Christian political witness which is truly *evangelical* cannot rest upon the a-teleological, non-transcendent principles underwriting Hardt/Negri's thesis. For these scholars the question is not simply 'how to subvert empire' but rather 'what is true politics,' and particularly what is true *evangelical* politics. Is Hardt/Negri's 'will to be against' theologically permissible (ch. 6)? Should immanence replace transcendence in our Christian response to empire (chs. 15, 18)? Not surprisingly, a direct challenge to Hardt/Negri issues from the corner of the Radical Orthodoxy crowd. John Milbank's essay sustains an unyielding criticism of the late-modern liberalism that dominates contemporary Western politics (ch. 7). What matters to Milbank is that Christian theology receives its due as the source and sustenance of the West's many cherished political institutions – what Hardt/Negri would just as well do without. To what extent that debt needs be recognised is debated (pp. 253-4); yet it is clear that for Milbank and sympathisers, evangelicals are called not to spontaneous *ad hoc* subversiveness but true political thinking. Which requires, argues Michael Horton, not the radical deconstruction of the evangelical witness, not the 'pilgrimage without a destination' of Hardt/Negri (p. 257), but the right kind of *theological* dynamic articulated between what St. Augustine famously described as the heavenly city and the earthly city; the supreme good, and the common good for which every Christian must labour to preserve.

What *EE* imparts to evangelicals is not so much a single programme for reform but a multifaceted assault on Christian complacency in the days of modern empire. No doubt many articles will frustrate those for whom 'evangelical' denotes something definite and absolute, but this is to be welcomed rather than pre-empted. Indeed it is a virtue of this volume that its contributors disagree so much, that the mutual point of departure is the work of non-evangelical scholars, rather than the representative of any one tradition in Christianity. This allows for a whole range of important voices to emerge. Recommended reading.

Ian Clausen, University of Edinburgh

The Infinite Merit of Christ: The Glory of Christ's Obedience in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards

Craig Biehl

Reformed Academic Press, 2009, ISBN: 978-0-9800370-3-6. xvii + 271pp. \$22.95

Biehl's dissertation-turned-book attempts to fill the christological lacuna in Edwards studies by focusing on Christ as the centrepiece of Edwards'

trinitarian theology. Dissertations and articles addressing christology and the various doctrines of redemption are on the rise. Nonetheless, this work is the first focused entirely on Christ's work of meriting salvation for the elect. Biehl contrasts his thesis to what he sees as revisionist interpretations which abstract Edwards from his Reformed Orthodox moorings; Sang Hyun Lee, Gerald McDermott, Anri Morimoto receive the most attention, but neo-orthodox interpreters like Niebuhr, Elwood and Robert Jenson are also discussed.

Biehl's analysis begins with the trinitarian nature of God's glory as it is communicated to his elect creatures as the ultimate purpose of God's work in the world. The focal point of this work is Christ's perfect obedience to God's rule of righteousness. Concentrating his attention on God's economic movement, chapter 2 attends to Edwards' understanding of the pre-temporal covenant of redemption and its trinitarian origin. Chapters 3-5 examine Christ's role as the second Adam, where God the Father, invoking the covenant of redemption made with Christ, demands perfect obedience to his law. The only basis of salvation for man under Adam is Christ's perfect obedience providing pardon from sin as well as, necessarily, perfect positive righteousness imputed to the elect. Through Christ's work believers partake in God's ultimate purpose of displaying and communicating his glory, as well as providing union and communion of believers with the Trinity.

Biehl takes a polemical posture at the outset of the volume, seeking to 'let Edwards speak for himself' rather than having the secondary material set the interpretive agenda; he believes the latter has mostly clouded the clarity Edwards himself brought to these issues. He is rightly concerned that modern sensibilities are frustrated by Edwards' exclusivist and scripture-centric accounts and therefore offer interpretive grids to read Edwards that reorient his thought.

While this means Biehl does an excellent job of addressing the various topics in a way true to Edwards and his theology, it unfortunately gives rise to some curious features, features which restrict the usefulness and reliability of his work.

First, one wonders if 'letting Edwards speak for himself' necessarily entails dismissing whole schools of thought without engagement. One can respect Biehl's concern for purity of interpretation. But when interpretive options are suppressed by ignoring alternative readings altogether, it begins to seem as though 'letting Edwards speak for himself' is more of an excuse to neglect critical scholarship than a legitimate goal. One begins to worry that Biehl believes his interpretive decisions are beyond question, and that he does not need to address the major debates in Edwards studies.

Not only does Biehl rid himself of scholarly decisions, he also surprisingly ignores the interpretive issues of genre, dating and development. Edwards wrote in a variety of forms – sermons, notebooks, Bible notes, letters, biographies, narratives, theological treatises, apologies, among others – for a variety of reasons and at different stages in his life. Surely one wishing to let Edwards be himself would be careful to discuss the complexity of Edwards' writing and purposes. And yet Biehl is as free from Edwards on these important details as he is from Edwards' modern students.

Moreover, the work is so dominated by block quotations of Edwards that it may be more accurate to call Biehl the compiler rather than the author of this work. One endorser lauds that there are eight-hundred quotes from Edwards in the volume and suggests that this is what it means to 'let Edwards speak for himself'. Again, one can appreciate Biehl's concern to let Edwards be Edwards, but not when it means Biehl leaves the reader to simply read Edwards without guidance.

Biehl does take up a lacuna in the field, and his book helpfully collects important passages from Edwards' corpus. But his failure to engage with broader theological and historical issues coupled with his cavalier dismissal of Edwards scholarship make this volume unfortunately anemic.

Kyle Strobel, University of Aberdeen

Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach

Robin Routledge

Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-8447-4286-8. 384pp., £16.99.

Routledge's stated goal in *Old Testament Theology* is to provide a textbook on the title topic that would be suitable 'for the ordinary student or pastor' (p. 9). To this end the book is divided into ten chapters, each dealing with major themes in OT theology. Routledge begins with a rather long introductory chapter on the nature and interpretation of the OT. This chapter also contains an historical overview of the discipline of OT theology which the first time reader should probably skip as it is somewhat laborious and primarily of interest to OT scholars. This is followed by chapters on the nature and attributes of God and the Spirit and on creation in the OT. Five chapters discuss the various ways that God relates to his people: through covenant, through the giving of instruction and the law, and through the mediatory roles of priest and kings. These chapters also discuss the appropriate response of the people to God: sacrifices, keeping of religious festivals, worship, and right living. The final two chapters describe the OT views on the future, including messianic hopes, death

and the possibility of the after life, and on God's providential relationship to foreign nations.

In general Routledge has succeeded in discussing his topics at a level that would be appropriate for pastors or advanced undergraduates, who make up his intended audience. As such, this book is an excellent starting point for the investigation of various areas of OT theology. This starting point is especially suitable as Routledge begins each section by carefully cross-referencing relevant monographs, articles, and passages in other major OT theologies. In addition, there is an extensive bibliography as well as scripture, author, and subject indices allowing the reader to quickly locate pertinent passages. Routledge generally provides concise explication of the major positions on each issue, by drawing from a broad range of secondary sources, before his own view, generally in step with the standard evangelical positions, is argued for. A careful reading of Routledge's sections on difficult questions in the OT will be especially rewarding. In this section, which is exemplary of the scholarship of the book as a whole, Routledge expositis OT passages that wrestle with difficult questions such as 'why do the wicked prosper?' and 'why do the wicked suffer?' (e.g. Gen 18.25; Jer 12.1; and Job).

Unfortunately, especially in the first chapter, Routledge is perhaps less than charitable when, for example, associating 'the broad sweep of the new literary criticism' with postmodern pluralism (p. 64) or claiming that systematic theology 'necessarily involves imposing an alien order and structure on [the OT]' (p. 28). This second claim is especially ironic as many of Routledge's section headings, such as 'God is personal' (p. 102) or 'God's Transcendence' and 'God's immanence' (p. 132), could have been plucked directly from a systematic theology. Furthermore, this reader is frequently disappointed that Routledge does not follow the various themes which he addresses through to their culmination in Christ Jesus. For example, the discussion of the priesthood (pp. 180-185) has no reference to the great high priest (Heb 4.14) nor does the discussion of Adam and the Fall refer to the one of whom Adam was a type (Rom 5.14). Despite these drawbacks, *Old Testament Theology* is a welcome answer to a felt need for a textbook length overview of the major theological topics of the OT.

Nathan Chambers, Langley, Washington USA

Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels

Kenneth Bailey

London: SPCK, 2008. ISBN 978-0281059751. 400pp. £12.99.

Kenneth Bailey combines personal experience with academic acumen in his investigation of the cultural milieu of the Gospels. In order to understand particular Gospel stories in light of Middle Eastern culture, he reflects upon his sixty years as a resident in the Middle East and incorporates material that English-speaking academics have frequently neglected—Arabic translations of the New Testament, ancient Syriac and Arabic Christian literature, and the insights of medieval and modern Middle Eastern New Testament scholars. Any comparison of twentieth- and first-century Middle Eastern culture is bound to be anachronistic, yet Bailey's biographical excerpts are entertaining and provide texture to Gospel stories that address political, social, and economical injustice.

The monograph is divided into six parts: The Birth of Jesus (Chs 1-4), The Beatitudes (5-6), The Lord's Prayer (7-10), Dramatic Actions of Jesus (11-13), Jesus and Women (14-20), and Parables of Jesus (21-32). Particular attention is given to the synoptic gospels; only two chapters are devoted to the Fourth Gospel and both deal with Jesus' interactions with women—'The Woman at the Well' (Jn 4.1-42) and 'The Lady is not for Stoning' (Jn 7.53-8.11). Although Bailey provides novel hypotheses for the exclusion of this latter pericope from our earliest manuscripts (it may have promoted adultery) and the identification of Jesus' script in the dust ('death' or 'kill her' or 'stone her with stones'), they are not entirely convincing (p. 235).

Most chapters follow a common form: a chart that clarifies the rhetorical structure of the pericope, followed by the interpretation and exegesis of the passage, concluding with a list of key points. Bailey frequently draws attention to the 'ring composition' of a pericope—a rhetorical tool that emphasizes the main point of the passage. However, the numerous cross-references to other canonical and extra-canonical literature, while interesting and thought-provoking, tend to saturate the main point with extraneous material, which is eventually diluted when immersed with other key points in the chapter summary. (Which of the fifteen key points from 'The Woman at the Well' is the main point? (pp. 215-216))

Despite these quibbles, Bailey provides valuable insight into the cultural peculiarities of the Middle East that help us read the Gospels 'through Middle Eastern eyes' and see things we may have missed. Mary's anxiety about Martha's behavior may be that she simply wanted someone to help peel the potatoes, but Bailey draws attention to the odd-

ity of female disciples and suggests that Mary's anxiety is related to the cultural shame she would have felt because her little sister is 'seated with the men and has become a disciple of Rabbi Jesus' (p. 193). Bailey also elucidates how shameful it was for Zacchaeus to run and climb a tree on the outskirts of town, yet this demonstrated his sincere zeal for Jesus that later materialized in his exaggerated (yet culturally acceptable) promise to repay those he had wronged (pp. 176-182). Yet the best chapter is the first. After numerous penetrating questions that undermine the traditional setting of Jesus' birth in a stable, Bailey concludes, 'The child was born in the normal surroundings of a peasant sometime after they arrived in Bethlehem, and there was no heartless innkeeper with whom to deal' (p. 36). It is somewhat unfortunate that I will never be able to attend a traditional Christmas pageant without feeling a sense of scepticism, yet this feeling is welcome in that it makes us question our traditional Western interpretations of familiar gospel stories, which is Bailey's intention throughout the monograph.

Lorne R. Zelyck, University of Cambridge

A Bird's Eye-View of Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message

Michael F. Bird

Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1844742554. 192pp. £8.99.

Michael Bird, Lecturer in New Testament at Highland Theological College, intends to provide a guide to Paul and his letters for undergraduate students, lay persons, and pastors.

The first chapter focuses on answering the question, 'Who is Paul?' Bird organises his response to this question by discussing Paul as a persecutor, missionary, theologian, pastor and martyr. In chapter two, Bird deals with the material in the New Testament related to Paul's conversion. Issues covered in this chapter include the chronology of Paul's life, the grounds for his persecution of Christians, and how his theology shifted post-conversion. The third chapter begins the treatment of Paul's theology by focusing on the 'narratives' which underlie his thought. Here, Bird draws upon recent research which argues for the presence of six fundamental stories – God and creation; Adam and Christ; Abraham; Israel; Jesus; the Church – which directly impact Paul's beliefs. In his fourth chapter, Bird provides a concise summary of each of the Pauline epistles. This chapter addresses such important interpretive issues as the authorship, purpose and structure of each letter. The next chapter addresses the nature of the Pauline gospel. Here, Bird primarily attempts to provide

the reader with a more comprehensive understanding of the gospel. The chief goal within this chapter is to demonstrate the gospel is best understood as 'the story of Jesus the Messiah, his death and resurrection, and faith and repentance towards him', rather than a set of logical inferences based upon God's holiness and humanity's sinful condition (pp. 74–75). Chapter six comprises a discussion of the various theological means by which Paul explicates the nature of salvation. Accordingly, Bird examines the concepts of righteousness, sacrifice, reconciliation, redemption, adoption, renewal, and victory. The seventh chapter focuses on the important subject of Pauline eschatology. Bird appropriately engages such subjects as the nature of Paul's 'now and not-yet' eschatology, the Parousia, and the future of Israel. In chapter eight, Bird reflects on the relationship between the Pauline epistles and Jewish monotheism. Bird's handling of this issue seeks to show by means of such texts as 1 Cor 8.6; Phil 2.5–11; and Rom 9.5 that Paul is an advocate of what could be labeled 'messianic monotheism', the notion that 'God is known through Jesus the Messiah, or Jesus is the one who reveals and manifests the person and work of God' (p. 125). Chapter nine focuses on Pauline ethics. A variety of issues are analyzed in this chapter including the role of the Mosaic Law, the relationship between law and liberty, and Paul's attitude towards sexuality. The final chapter considers Paul's spirituality. Bird tackles this issue under two primary headings: 1) cruciformity, the process of conforming oneself to a life patterned after Jesus' death; and 2) what he labels 'anastasis', the reality of being made alive in Christ.

This work succeeds in its aim of providing a basic introduction to Paul. Importantly, it is current on the state of the questions in Pauline scholarship, assessing such issues as the 'New Perspective' of Paul and Paul's relationship to the Roman Empire. At the same time, this strength gives rise to a significant weakness: in attempting to tackle technical issues such as the meaning of the phrase 'faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ' in an introductory text, Bird occasionally bypasses some significant criticisms of the readings he advocates. Nevertheless, Bird's book is a helpful resource for anyone wishing to begin the often arduous journey of engaging with the writings of Paul.

Mark Owens, University of Aberdeen

Paul: Missionary of Jesus

Paul Barnett

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8028-4891-8. xvi + 240pp. £8.99.

Paul, the most powerful figure in earliest Christianity, is often seen to have hijacked the religion of Jesus and made it into something that was never intended. The central thesis addressed in twelve chapters maybe stated thus: ‘Was [Paul’s] mission and message Jesus’ mission and message?’ or ‘Was Paul a true missionary of Jesus?’

Barnett paints a broad picture of Paul and his impact on earliest Christianity and then tests the ‘wall of discontinuity’ between Jesus and Paul constructed by some scholars, which distances Paul’s ministry from the ministry of Jesus. The author argues against such a ‘wall’ showing that Paul actually knew Jesus as a contemporary in Jerusalem. In building a case for the close relationship between Paul and Jesus, Barnett holds that Paul was both converted and called - the Damascus event represents a complete relational and moral turnabout (conversion) that was accompanied by a radical new vocation to preach the Gentiles and bring them into the covenant (call).

The core question is addressed in chapter 7: ‘Was Paul’s mission to the Gentiles according to the mind of Jesus and an authentic extension to his own ministry in Israel? Was Paul a true missionary of Jesus?’ Surveying the Gospels he shows a ‘two-stage’ outlook in Jesus’ ministry—a pre-resurrection one that was first restricted to Israel and a post-resurrection one that was then aimed at the [Gentile] nations. Paul’s call included this commission to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. The fact that leading apostles affirmed this mission in an acknowledgement that such a task was indeed in accordance with the mind of the historical Jesus (Gal 2.2, 7-9).

Barnett argues that the opposition that Paul encountered (during c. 47-57) from the ‘circumcisers’ was a determined counter-mission against his mission to win Gentiles on a circumcision-free basis. Similarly, Barnett uses the letter to Romans to show that it addressed specifically this Jewish-Christian countermission. By opposing this, Paul was in fact emulating Jesus’ opposition of the Pharisees who insisted on ritual observance for sinners, thus bringing Paul’s thinking and ministry in line with Jesus’. 2 Corinthians too shows that Paul’s own life and ministry was based on Jesus’ life and ministry. This ‘replication’ validated his apostleship and ministry, thus making him a ‘true’ missionary of Jesus, unlike the ‘false’ apostles. Barnett remarks: ‘so close is this identification with Christ that Paul actually describes his ministry in terms almost identical with those

he applies to Christ' (p. 177). Thus, yet again, Paul modeled his ministry on Jesus' own, thereby confirming him to be a true missionary of Jesus.

While the lucid language engages the reader, unfortunately, the book has no real conclusion. It might be argued that the twelfth chapter ('Paul's Achievement') serves this function, but it could quite well stand as an independent article. It would have been helpful if there was a proper conclusion pulling together the case that was being built up in the preceding chapters. Further, the five appendices, while informative in a general way, do not really contribute to the overall purpose of the book; In fact nothing would be lost even if these appendices were omitted.

Notwithstanding, *Paul: Missionary of Jesus* is an insightful study into a contentious issue (i.e. that Paul set out in his own direction, and not on a trajectory that Jesus envisaged for the church). Scriptural evidence and helpful tables lend strength to Barnett's arguments, which are well documented. The book's 'reader friendly' approach makes it accessible to scholar and lay person alike. The overall thesis is well developed and clearly expressed. Undoubtedly, this will be a helpful resource for scholars, church leaders and all those interested in the life and ministry of Paul.

Rev Dr Mark Jason, The Methodist Church, The Gambia

Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor

Brian S. Rosner

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8028-3374-7. 214pp. £14.99.

In his analysis of the two phrases 'greed...is idolatry' and 'a greedy person...is an idolater' (Col 3.5; Eph 5.5, NIV), Rosner concludes that together they communicate that 'to have a strong desire to acquire and keep for oneself more and more money and material things is an attack on God's exclusive rights to human love and devotion, trust and confidence, and service and obedience' (p. 173). Part I sets forth the phrases' history of interpretation with extensive description (cf. summary on p. 11; his excellent treatments of Luther, pp. 32ff; David Clarkson, pp. 43ff) and brief evaluation; it then concludes with methodology: historically, Jewish (vs. Greco-Roman, e.g., Stoic) literature best illumines the phrases' origin and meaning; literarily, the phrases are best understood as metaphors (he cites the work of Janet Soskice *et al.*), a hypothesis whose methodological implications he then clarifies.

Part II attempts to locate the 'origin' of the notion 'greed is idolatry' beginning with the Hebrew Bible, exploring the Shema, the golden

calf incident, Ps 10, Prov 30.7-9; regarding Job 31.24-28 (cf. 22.23-30), he states 'what the greedy offer gold..., namely, their trust, confidence, and joy, is considered both in Job and in the Old Testament generally as due God' (p. 78). He combs Qumran, examines *Testament of Judah* (19.1), the rabbinic literature (noting in the Targumim forms of the Shema that render 'with all your *strength*' as 'with all your *possessions*'), and Philo (whose metaphorical use of idolatry is contemporary to Col/Eph). After exploring the NT, he concludes: while no evidence of 'literary dependence' exists, the way for the Pauline phrases was '...paved by the comprehensive scope of the first commandment, by the characterization of idolatry in terms of evil desire, and above all by the association of wealth with apostasy' (p. 99).

In Part III the two phrases' philology and syntax are explored: e.g., just what does *pleonexia* mean (sexual *and/or* material insatiability)? Does the clause '...which is idolatry' modify only *pleonexia* or all the vices in Col 3.5 (and, *mutatis mutandis*, in Eph 5.5)? On both, Rosner admits, commentators are divided; his discussion brings little resolution. The late introduction and modest analysis of these (and other—cf. p. 105) important matters introduce a measure of exegetical instability to the work. Strangely absent is a consideration of *pleonexia* in Eph 4.19 and indeed of 4.17-24, with its numerous affinities with Col 3.5-10 and Rom 1.21ff. (Throughout the book Rosner, though convinced of the Pauline authorship of Col/Eph [p. 5], consults the apostle infrequently.) Also, a brief treatment of (1) the phrases' immediate literary contexts and (2) their letters' theological emphases and general historical settings (e.g., *vis-à-vis* idolatry), along with greater philological/syntactical rigor, would have strengthened conclusions and provided greater precision to both the aim and method of Parts I and II.

Rosner excels in his discussion of idolatry—particularly in his portrayal of the revulsion it provoked within Second Temple Judaism; his biblical overview and theological conception of idolatry captures well its defining feature—namely, exclusivity (idolatry is 'an attack on God's exclusive right to our love and trust'; p. 148). Also, his excellent descriptions of the early church's attitudes/praxis regarding wealth and hospitality, his skill at making the reader 'feel' the weighty/unsettling rhetorical force of the metaphor 'greed is idolatry', and his excursus on 'implicit religion' (stimulating both academically and pastorally) all make for an excellent discussion of a neglected but most relevant subject.

Bruce Clark, University of Cambridge

Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision

N. T. Wright

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3863-9.
279pp. \$25.00.

Readers of this journal are well aware of the controversy surrounding N. T. Wright's reading of Paul's theology. Since the publication of his 1997 book, *What St. Paul Really Said* (Eerdmans), Wright has been associated with what has been called 'the new perspective on Paul' and has endured withering criticism. Wright here responds to John Piper's critique, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* (Crossway, 2007); his aims are to set forth definitively his exegesis of Paul on justification, to defend his evangelical credentials and to demonstrate his loyalty to the Reformation spirit.

First, Piper criticises Wright for situating Paul within the context of first-century Judaism rather than the heritage of Reformed theology. Wright responds that Piper's move is a 'disturbing' departure from evangelical interpretive method (p. 51). Evangelicals, in faithfulness to the Reformed vision of 'always reforming', have strived always to hold their tradition more lightly than their Bibles, allowing the latter constantly to purify and transform the former. Piper, secondly, attempts to situate Wright as a scholar pursuing what is fashionable whereas Piper is a pastor who recognises that the pressing need of the day is for a faithful articulation of justification. This is unfair. Wright also writes with a pastoral concern, and he, too, is attempting to interpret Scripture faithfully.

A third preliminary point by Piper to which Wright responds is that the crying need of the day is for individuals to be assured of their standing before God. This is indeed important, but in Wright's view, Paul's theological vision is more robust and comprehensive, involving God reclaiming humanity for his name and restoring his broken creation. This inevitably involves, of course, other important issues, such as the salvation of individuals and the assurance of salvation, but Wright's main burden is to understand *Paul's* concerns, taking in the whole of his theology.

The orienting point for Wright is the Scriptural narrative, the account of the Creator God's call of Israel to be the people through whom God redeems creation. This mission of God helps to inform Paul's use of 'righteousness' language, and Wright contends that the best way to understand Paul's use of this word, along with related terms, is to relate it to God's own 'covenant faithfulness'—God's faithfulness to his own creation (p. 63) and his faithfulness to his promises to Israel (p. 65). When applied to humans, 'righteousness' and 'justification' language have the law court for an interpretive context. When God justifies a person, then, God de-

clares that one to be in the right. He vindicates him, finding him to have the status of 'righteous' in the eyes of the court (p. 69).

Much more, of course, must be said about Christian salvation than this, but Wright's contention is that for Paul, justification functioned very narrowly. In later Christian theological development, however, it became loaded with far more freight than it was supposed to bear. In one sense, this is to be expected in the course of the development of Christian doctrine. But when we expect Paul to be addressing later concerns when he talks about justification, we will be confused and disappointed. There are other theological tools at Paul's disposal, such as believers' incorporation into Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit and the death and resurrection of Christ. Each of these radiates significance and the manner in which they all inter-relate must be grasped rightly in order to understand how Paul's thought works. This is largely Wright's point in chapter 4.

Some may remember the Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference in 2003 in which Wright had a lively, direct and charitable exchange with Simon Gathercole over this topic. Many had come with suspicions heightened, prepared to disagree strongly with Wright. After intense theological dialogue and a wonderful time of fellowship, however, there was a clear recognition that many criticisms were wide of the mark and that Wright's work was in direct continuity with the spirit of the reformers. Most of the attendees left having embraced a brother and ally in the pursuit of faithfulness to God. In the same way, this book is a vigorous exercise in Scripture interpretation, and a charitable reading ought to help eliminate confusion and misunderstanding.

Dr Timothy G. Gombis, Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH USA

Recent NT Introductions and Theologies

NT introductions and theologies abound these days. I hope this notice assists those making decisions about which ones are worthwhile. Only evangelicals, on account of their belief in the divine unity of the canon, continue the project of NT theology largely abandoned by academics whose commitment to historicism has by definition denied its possibility. Thus, from evangelical presses, we have: I. Howard Marshall's (IVP, 2004); Frank Thielman's (Zondervan, 2005); Frank Matera's (WJK, 2007); Tom Schreiner's (Apollos, 2008); James Julius Scott Jr's, (Mentor, 2008); James Dunn's (Abingdon, 2009); Ben Witherington III's (IVP, 2009); and translated into English from the 2007 German, Udo Schnelle's (Baker, 2009). Of these, Marshall's is the best, but Thielman's and Schnelle's are both strong and we await a verdict on Dunn's in a future issue of SBET. I remain unconvinced that any of the above surpass G. B. Caird's (Clarendon, 1995) or George Ladd's (Eerdmans, 1993). Schreiner's has been

found by scholars to be a bit forced in terms of its overall theme, but those who share his American Calvinism will surely find it illuminating.

If one were to choose Schreiner, it might be beneficial to have alongside it volume one of Witherington's *The Indelible Image*. Witherington believes that God's salvation is creational as it concerns the restoration of humanity into the image of God which, he further believes, is moral. The first volume in the two-volume set moves through the NT book-by-book. It hopes to show how in the NT theology and ethics are inseparable and thus belief in Christ includes imitation of Christ. It is a bit uneven and superficial, more like a wandering survey than a microscopic investigation. But again, pastors might find useful to put the divergent perspectives of Schreiner and Witherington into dialogue, for, at risk of appearing dialectical, sometimes clarity and insight emerge from difference.

NT introductions from the last five years are: David deSilva's (IVP, 2004); D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo's (Zondervan, 2005); Carl Holaday's (Abingdon, 2005); D. C. Parker's (CUP, 2008); *The Cradle, the Cross and the Crown* by Andreas Köstenberger, Scott Kellum and Charles Quarles (Broadman and Holman, 2009); *The New Testament in Antiquity* by Gary Burge, Lynn Cohick and Gene Green (Zondervan, 2009); and Mark Powell's (Baker, 2009). Here decisions are much more difficult. Carson, Moo and Morris has been the evangelical standard for some time, and the latest edition sans Morris exhibits nothing that would decrease its status as such. No student of the NT can afford to be without it and no one should be tempted to get the forthcoming abridgment instead. As with Dunn above, we await to hear about Köstenberger *et al* in a future *SBET*.

The most needed book is Burge *et al*. After a brief introduction to the study of the NT, the authors over the next three chapters explore the historical, social and cultural background of the NT. While Everett Ferguson's *Background of Early Christianity*, now in its third edition (Eerdmans, 2003) is more detailed, the treatment of this content in *New Testament in Antiquity* is good for those not immersed in NT studies or for beginning students. The remaining chapters survey the NT book-by-book, commenting upon authorship, date, setting and themes. While I was initially excited about this book, as we lack a good exploration of the NT books in terms of their ancient setting, I was disappointed for two reasons: First, Carson and Moo treat the authorship, dating, setting and interpretive issues much more informatively. Second, when it came right down to it, there was very little integration of the discussion of the setting into the discussion of the books' distinctive content. I do think, however, that *New Testament in Antiquity* could be used with profit in churches wishing to promote more NT understanding amongst congregants.

This brings us to Powell's new introduction. The book itself is dazzlingly beautiful, using Christian art throughout the centuries along with pictures with rich effect. And Powell's literary liveliness is a nice complement to the book's design. In terms of content, Powell excels at laying out all the scholarly options for interpretive issues, though without giving the details of where those arguments can be found. He leaves the decisions to the readers, which, depending on one's needs, could be an advantage over Carson and Moo which regularly argues for the evangelical position. There is little doubt that Powell's volume is appealing for those just beginning to study the NT formally. But I continue to think that Carson and Moo is the most comprehensive, detailed and informative NT introduction.

Rev James R. A. Merrick, Review Editor

BOOK REVIEWS

J. P. MORELAND: <i>The Recalcitrant Imago Dei: Human Persons and the Failure of Naturalism</i> (R. W. Fischer)	214
ALISTER E. McGRATH: <i>The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology</i> (Eric Hall)	215
BRUCE ELLIS BENSON AND PETER GOODWIN HELTZEL (EDS): <i>Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo</i> (Ian Clausen)	217
CRAIG BIEHL: <i>The Infinite Merit of Christ: The Glory of Christ's Obedience in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards</i> (Kyle Strobel)	218
ROBIN ROUTLEDGE: <i>Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach</i> (Nathan Chambers)	220
KENNETH BAILEY: <i>Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels</i> (Lorne R. Zelyck)	222
MICHAEL F. BIRD: <i>A Bird's Eye-View of Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message</i> (Mark Owens)	223
PAUL BARNETT: <i>Paul: Missionary of Jesus</i> (Mark Jason)	225
BRIAN S. ROSNER: <i>Greed as Idolatry: The Origin and Meaning of a Pauline Metaphor</i> (Bruce Clark)	226
N. T. WRIGHT: <i>Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision</i> (Timothy G. Gombis)	228
Recent NT Introductions and Theologies (James R. A. Merrick)	229