

order to check their validity. However, again, such differences of view were not sufficient to cast any doubt as to the overall logic of the main argument of the book. The selection of the aspects of theodicy as per the chapters is more of a systematic ordering than one directly suggested by the biblical evidence, even though, equally, the categories can definitely be seen to arise from the biblical material. Finally, I felt that the conclusion had aspects that did not quite tie in with the preceding discussion, but this is a minor criticism.

As a whole, this is an excellent work. Whether or not one agrees with the conclusions of the book, it is a must read for anyone wishing to seriously look into the problem of theodicy.

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Global Bible Commentary

Daniel Patte, J. Severino Croatto, Nicole Wilkinson Duran et al. (eds.)

Nashville: Abingdon, 2004. 571 pp., \$ 39, paperback.
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SUMMARY

The present volume gathers interpretations of all biblical books (or at least key passages) and essays on additional topics from a contextual perspective. The international team of contributors sets out with detailed descriptions of their own contexts (or their chosen contexts) which raise and determine the issues addressed by the following contextual commentary. The introduction by D. Patte (reviewed in detail below) raises a number of crucial hermeneutical issues which evangelicals also face. The commentaries help readers to see aspects in biblical text hitherto unnoticed and may help users to appreciate that their own interpretations are also influenced by their contexts. The issue of validity in interpretation is not sufficiently raised.

ZUSAMMENFASUNG

Der vorliegende Band ist eine Sammlung von Interpretationen aller biblischen Bücher (oder zumindest von Schlüsselpassagen) und von Essays über zusätzliche Themen aus einer kontextuellen Perspektive. Das internationale Team von Beitragsautoren startet mit detaillierten Beschreibungen ihrer eigenen Kontexte (oder ihrer gewählten Kontexte), die die Fragen aufwerfen und festlegen, die im folgenden kontextuellen Kommentar bearbeitet werden. Die Einleitung von D. Patte (die unten detailliert rezensiert wird) wirft eine Reihe von entscheidenden hermeneutischen Fragen auf, mit denen Evangelikale ebenfalls konfrontiert sind. Die Kommentare helfen den Lesern, Aspekte in biblischen Texten zu sehen, die bisher unbeachtet waren, und sie können den Benutzern helfen anzuerkennen, dass ihre eigenen Interpretationen ebenfalls durch ihre Kontexte beeinflusst sind. Die Frage der Gültigkeit und Wahrhaftigkeit von Interpretation wird nicht ausreichend behandelt.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage rassemble des interprétations de passages clé de tous les livres de la Bible, ainsi que des essais sur des questions supplémentaires, en adoptant une approche contextuelle. Les contributions émanent d'une équipe internationale dont les membres indiquent de façon détaillée dans quel contexte ils se situent eux-mêmes, ou dans quel contexte ils ont choisi de se situer, en partant du principe que c'est ce contexte qui suscite et détermine les questions abordées ensuite dans le commentaire. Dans l'introduction, Daniel Patte pose un bon nombre de questions herméneutiques cruciales, auxquelles les Évangéliques ont aussi à apporter des réponses. Les commentaires aident le lecteur à découvrir dans le texte biblique des aspects jusque-là ignorés et peuvent lui faire prendre conscience que ses propres interprétations sont elles aussi influencées par le contexte dans lequel il se situe lui-même. La question de ce qui fait la validité d'une interprétation reste cependant insuffisamment abordée.

* * * *

The present one volume commentary is fully contextual in its orientation. In the introduction the chief editor Daniel Patte outlines the idea and purpose of this international project. The selection of the contributors "seeks to approximate the geographical, denominational, and gender balance of Bible readers around the world today. ... Thus approximately two-thirds of the commentators are scholars from the 'two-thirds world', with a proportional and thus smaller number of contributors from the Western world (including two Jewish scholars) and the Eastern Orthodox world" (xxi). Twenty eight of the contributors are female. The women are not fully represented (i.e. thirty three), "because the number of female biblical scholars is still relatively small, though growing in the two-thirds world" (xxi).

These commentators were given two questions to answer:

"What is the teaching of the given biblical book for believers in your specific social, economic, cultural, and religious context?" In order to give the scholars from the two-thirds world the opportunity to address issues that colonialist attitudes have prevented them from raising, we further specified that each of the commentators should ask: "What does this given book say regarding the relationship of the people of God to the world? (xxi).

According to Patte, such a commentary is an "Invitation to read the Bible as for the first time" (xxiii), because "the commentary points out significant aspects of the biblical text that we have overlooked, possibly simply because we have taken them for granted. What was for us a familiar biblical book, which no longer had anything new for us, becomes once again a surprising, disturbing, challenging, prodding, demanding, or wooing address that we cannot ignore. The muffled, subdued, tamed biblical text with which some of us might have

been satisfied becomes once again alive” (xxiv). Patte further makes a passionate plea that biblical interpretation always matters for believers and scholars because of its powerful effects on people (xxiv-xxix, “Yes, biblical interpretation matters, when it justifies injustice and abuse of innocents, instead of calling us ‘to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God’”, xxvif). Therefore Bible interpreters have to ask “Is this the most appropriate interpretation for a particular life context? ... Whom does the chosen interpretation help and whom might it hurt? Certain choices of interpretation have devastating effects” (xxvi). The question of which interpretation is most faithful to the text and its own literary, historical and cultural context is not in view.

Some of the commentators “find that they have to debate with the biblical text, because its taken-for-granted message was, and still is so destructive in their contexts. It is enough to mention here four commentaries that struggle with books that were used to justify colonialism and colonialist mission” (xxviii). While this is convincing and interesting for D. Mbuwayesango reading *Joshua* from Zimbabwe and South Africa (64-73), J. Havea reading *Numbers* from the South Pacific Islands (43-51) and J. Ukpong reading *Luke’s Gospel* from Nigeria (385-94), it is curious to listen to D. Nolan Fewell reading *Ezra* and *Nehemia* (127-34) “from the perspective of a European American mother who keeps before her eyes the effects of colonialism on the children in the Two-Thirds World” (xxviii).

Patte further describes how biblical interpretations engender defensive attitude (readers become very protective of their interpretations) and how this may be overcome by reading the Bible *with* others rather than for (or to) others. Our reading with the commentators of this volume is “greatly facilitated by their willingness to acknowledge that their interpretations are contextual. Because we know that the interpretation of a given biblical book is concerned with a context other than ours, we do not need to be defensive. It is clear from the outset that these commentators are not reading the Bible *for us* or *to us*. They are not telling us either how we should be reading the biblical book or what interpretation of the biblical book we should adopt. On the contrary, the commentator frees us to read and re-read the biblical book on our own” (xxix). Rather, the commentaries gathered in this volume “... call us to recognize that our own interpretations are also framed by our own contextual and theological concerns – the first step in a long and ever ongoing journey toward abandoning our exclusivist outlook (be it imperialist, Eurocentric, androcentric, elitist, or religious) which gave us the nerve to claim that we were *reading for* everyone else whom we reduced to the status of subalterns – a strategy that European-American males unfortunately perfected” (xxx).

The commentaries on each book start with a section describing the “Life context of the interpretation” of the authors (who are introduced in some detail), because, “By making explicit the specific context and the concerns

from which they read the Bible, the scholars show the significance of aspects of the biblical text that readers in other contexts have often taken for granted or overlooked” (xxi). This is followed by the contextual comment (at times concentrating on the sections felt to be most pertinent for the particular context) and ending with a conclusion (relating comment and context) and a short bibliography which is mostly limited to literature in English. It is often limited to academic commentaries or monographs; however, at times it includes other contextual readings.

Let me mention some special features in addition to the commentaries on each biblical book. In the OT Isaiah is divided into four parts and commented by two authors; Ezekiel is likewise subdivided. The NT section has several extra chapters: *Jesus: an African perspective* (A. Nasimiyu Wasike, Kenya, 329-32); *Jesus: An Asian perspective* (C. Abesamis, Philippines, 333-36); *Jesus: A Latin American perspective* (P. Richard, Costa Rica, 337-41); *Jesus Christ: An Orthodox perspective* (V. Mihoc, Romania, 342-45); *Jesus: A Western perspective* (N. Wilkinson Duran, USA, 346-49); *Matthew 5-7: The Sermon on the Mount and India* (R. S. Sugirtharajah, U.K. and India, 361-66); *Mark’s healing stories in an AIDS context* (M. W. Dube, Botswana, 379-84); *Luke’s God and Mammon, a Latin American perspective* (R. Krüger, Argentina, 395-400); (Gospel of) *John in an Orthodox perspective* (P. Vassiliadis, Greece, 412-18); *1 Corinthians 11 in Christian and Muslim dialogue* (N. Wilkinson Duran, D. Demirer both USA and Turkey, 451-54); *Hebrews: Sacrifice in an African perspective* (T. Okure, Nigeria, 535-38).

There are several European contributions, though some of the “European” representatives left Europe long ago, come from other parts of the world, work elsewhere or write for non-European contexts: C. Amos (UK) comments on Genesis (1-16); S. Scholz (Germany, together with A. Cooper, USA, from a Jewish perspective) on Leviticus (30-42); A. Brenner (Netherlands and Israel) on Proverbs (163-74); A. LaCocque (USA and Belgium) on Daniel (253-61); V. Mihoc (Romania) on “Jesus Christ: An Orthodox perspective” (342-45), R. S. Sugirtharajah (UK and India) on The Sermon on the Mount and India” (361-66); P. Vassiliadis (Greece) examines “John in an Orthodox perspective” (412-18, commenting on the eucharistic passages); D. Patte (USA and France) writes on Romans (429-44), including, on Romans 1.18-32, “the gospel proclaimed by Paul ... reveals that anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, and similar victimizations of others are rampant manifestations of the evil God condemns” – is that really the issue in this passage? The particular context of Patte’s interpretation is “French Huguenots and Anti-Semitism during World War II: Our dilemma in Light of Romans”. D. Demirer (USA and Turkey, together with N. Wilkinson) write on 1 Corinthians 11 in Christian and Muslim Dialogue (451-54). R. Riches from Scotland reads Ephesians drawing on the insights of a contextual Bible study group (473-81). Following

Riches' definition most Bible study groups would claim to be contextual because "Groups would work through a series of questions that help them first to read the text closely and then to make links between it and their own experience" (475). J. Beutler (Germany and Italy) comments on the Johannine Epistles (553-58), drawing on parallels between modern Europe and ancient Ephesus and the Christian communities in both areas. C. Rowland (UK) comments on Revelation (559-70): "My perspective on Revelation is that of one who, like John, has found himself taken out into the wilderness to see afresh the world as it is privileged to see the pervasive and subtle ways in which the culture of Babylon is at work undermining the human flourishing of the majority of the world's population" (559).

This volume is a celebration of context and contextual readings. It will broaden the horizon of its readers and introduce them to the many others who are reading the Bible in the global village. It also has the potential of showing users from the Western world that their interpretations likewise occur in a particular context. *The Global Bible Commentary* "invites its users not only to respect those 'other' interpretations, but also to recognize and make explicit the contextual character of their own interpretations of the Bible" (xxiii). Patte writes:

For many of us trained in Western scholarship, acknowledging the contextual and cultural character of our interpretations was not an easy exercise. Articulating the context of one's own interpretation is articulating which is assumed, not articulated, while one interprets a text within it. Following a long scholarly tradition, we envision a contextual interpretation as the application of the teaching of the text to our context. And so it is, in a sense. But "application of a text to a context" is an attitude that unduly denies that the "teaching of the text" what we identified is already constructed in terms of context (xxiii).

In view of this "... the *Global Bible Commentary* invites its users not only to respect these 'other' interpretations, but also to recognize and make explicit the contextual character of their own interpretations of the Bible" (xxiii). Thus the *Global Bible Commentary* raises a number of important hermeneutical issues that also need to be addressed by evangelicals, who – for various reasons (and a good number of them legitimate reasons!) – will be more concerned to take the authorial intent of a biblical book as point of departure rather than their particular context.

What is not discussed sufficiently is the issue of validity in interpretation. While Patte argues, "nothing is wrong with picking and choosing in a text what one perceives as most significant and as most appropriate for one's particular context. ... this is not to say that everything goes" (xxv). He suggests two criteria for assessing "what goes", which likewise raise a number of issues:

First, we need to assess how each given interpretation is grounded in one or another aspect of the

text. But because there is a plurality of legitimate interpretations, we biblical scholars have to be more democratic and less suspicious... Second, we must ask interpreters to be as aware as possible of their religions and ideological convictions. The more that interpreters make their presuppositions explicit, the less the risk that they will simply "read them into" the text. Interpretations that pretend to be objective or a mere presentation of "what the text meant" hide their presuppositions and inscribe them into the meaning of the text that should be universally accepted.

See further presentations and assessments of this approach by W. Dietrich, U. Luz (eds.), *Bibel im Weltkontext: Lektüren aus Lateinamerika-Afrika-Asien* (Zürich: TVZ, 2002); E. Hahn, "Anmerkungen zur Lektüre der Heiligen Schrift in Brasilien", *KuD* 36, 1990, 111-55; J. R. Levinson, P. Pope-Levinson, "Global Perspectives on New Testament Interpretation", in J. B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 329-48; M. Oeming, *Biblische Hermeneutik: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: WB, 1998), 120-29; T. Schmeller, *Das Recht der Anderen: Befreiungstheologische Lektüre des Neuen Testaments in Lateinamerika*, NTA 27 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1994); R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003).

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The New Perspective on Paul

James D. G. Dunn

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€ 149,00, hb, ISBN 3-16-148677-3

SUMMARY

This recent book by James Dunn is a collection of twenty-one essays by the author. Almost all the essays have been published before either as journal articles or as essays in edited volumes. One essay, however, is brand new ('Philippians 3.2-14 and the New Perspective on Paul') as is a lengthy introduction (pp. 1-88) where Dunn responds to much of the criticism he has received in the last twenty years. Most of the essays were written between 1990 – 2004, though three older articles are incorporated, including his famous essay 'The New Perspective on Paul' written in 1983. This book is a wonderful resource for anyone wishing to become acquainted in particular with the work of James Dunn, and in general with the so-called 'new perspective' on Paul.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses neue Buch von James Dunn ist eine Sammlung von 21 Essays des Autors. Fast alle Essays wurden bereits entweder als Zeitschriftenartikel oder Sammelbandbeiträge veröffentlicht. Ein Essay ist allerdings brandneu („Philipp 3,2-4 und die „New Perspective on Paul“), wie auch die